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POLAND & THE LEFT

OLIVER MACDONALD

Ernest Mandel on British Economic Disaster

CND: JOAN RUDDOCK INTERVIEWED

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Managing editor
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Editorial Board
Shelley Charlesworth, Valerie Coultas, Phil Hearse, Steve Kennedy, Megan Martin, Steve Marks, Martin Meteyard, Redmond O'Neill, Rich Palser, Ric Sissons, Colin Talbot
Design consultant
Katherine Gutkind

Editorial and distribution offices
328 Upper Street, London N1 2XP
Tel 01-359-8180
Typesetting, camerawork & layout
Lithoprint Ltd (TU), 329 Upper Street, London N1 2XP. Tel 01-359 8288
Printers
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Editorial

NO TO THE WITCH-HUNT

Commentators have experienced great difficulties over the past months finding new metaphors to describe the state of the Labour Party. Each new crisis finds the party 'hanging by its finger nails ... over the edge of the abyss' and all the rest. Now we are suddenly told that 'peace and unity' have broken out in the party since the Bishop's Stortford summit of Labour and union leaders. Even *Socialist Worker* echoed the view that Bennism was in its death agonies, carefully linking this claim to its assessment that the working class had shifted in its majority to the right under the hammer blows of the Tories.

The evidence for this supposed dramatic turnabout in the party's crisis is to be found in the promises of good behaviour said to have been made by all sides at the Bishop's Stortford meeting. Tony Benn is reported to have called for an end to the witch-hunt and for full support for Labour's conference policies, in return for which he would not run as deputy leader for a second time. The union leaders on the other hand promised more funds and an active campaign in support of the party. In return they asked that the left should not challenge the present right wing leadership of the party or take the party's political debates into the ranks of the unions round another election campaign.

But peace and unity will be short-lived. The political stakes are too high for all the protagonists in the Labour crisis. The whole future evolution of the labour movement, and the outcome of the next election in particular, are linked in to the current battles.

For the right wing labour bureaucracy the central question is to isolate and defeat the Bennite current in the party and the unions to pave the way for abandoning the conference's left policies in favour of the old middle of the road Callaghan/Wilson variety. They aim to steal back the SDP's clothes and to recapture the centre ground. Jim Callaghan himself has already flown the first kite about a possible coalition with the SDP if Labour cannot win the next election outright. An offensive against the left is therefore essential and inevitable.

But the question of government also informs the growing strength of the Bennite current. The idea of a new left wing Labour government committed to real social change and a break from the party's governmental past holds real attraction for a growing number of working people as the only way out of the political and economic crisis. The Bennite current thus reflects a developing polarisation between the classes and within the working class. Its base within the unions, which makes it unique among the Labour lefts since the War, is sufficiently powerful to threaten the project of the labour bureaucracy.

Rather than heralding a new era of peace within the party the Bishop's Stortford meeting marked a new stage in the growing differentiations of the left within the labour movement, divisions which centre round attitudes to the trade union bureaucracy. The Bennite leadership is based ultimately within this layer. It aims to recompose it around its bases in the miners' union, the TGWU and NUPE, as well as the regional and national leaderships of the Broad Lefts in other unions.

While Benn's deputy leadership campaign threatened some of these alliances nevertheless the breaks that the Bennite leadership makes from the bureaucracy are partial and temporary, designed at each stage to produce a new re-alignment within the bureaucracy rather than the construction of a new class struggle leadership in the labour movement based on mass action and socialist policies.

The result of the pressure for unity from the trade union bureaucracy has been the futile search for compromise by a section of the Bennite leadership, in particular that organised around the Labour Co-ordinating Committee (LCC). They place their hopes on winning back Foot from the clutches of the right wing. Michael Meacher even went so far as to suggest a new loyalty oath to Foot as the way to go about the witch-hunt.

Sections of the Bennite base have reacted in the opposite fashion, recognising that the struggle against the Tories and the SDP has to be coupled with a fight against the trade union bureaucracy. The role of the union leaders has been almost uniformly disgraceful. From the AUEW officials scabbing on the Laurence Scott workers despite 1000 branch resolutions supporting the strikers, through to the transport union chief Ron Todd in the recent Ford dispute, they have consistently added to the demoralisation and confusion in the ranks of the workers' movement. Nine times out of ten to fight against the Tories means to also take on your own union leadership. Each defeat and each sell-out brings a Labour defeat in the next election that little bit closer.

The question of how to ensure Labour wins the next election *and* breaks from the policies of Wilson/Callaghan will increasingly dominate working class politics. The idea that the left is somehow responsible for the present crisis in the party must be thrown back in the faces of the right wing. The left neither leads the party today, nor is it responsible for the

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The coalition way?

disaster of the last two Labour administrations. It is the left whose policies are more in tune with popular demands for change, and which is increasingly the force which is building or rebuilding the party after SDP defections.

In fact the active core of support that remains for the party tends more and more to coincide with the Bennite base in the workers' movement. It is vital that the next period sees the beginnings of a serious attempt to co-ordinate and mobilise this base, both against the Tories and the SDP and the right wing labour bureaucracy. The new Labour Liaison Committee, along with the union Broad Lefts and the Labour lefts can play a crucial role in this process. Revolutionary socialists should be part of this process at every level.

There are three other crucial components of creating the conditions for a Labour victory: first, the fight for a socialist manifesto for Labour, based on genuine socialist policies. Jobs not Bombs sums up the programme Labour should fight on. And as the failure of the Labour GLC shows such a programme will need a commitment to mobilise the labour movement to defeat attempts by the courts and the state apparatuses to sabotage its implementation.

Second, Labour should reach out now to build the campaigns such as CND, a woman's right to work, and Poland, to root them in the labour movement; third, and most importantly, joint Labour Party/trade union activity should be taken up at every level, from giving support to workers fighting the Tory government through to campaigning for union democracy and establishing workplace Labour branches. None of these steps will be possible unless the witch-hunt against the left in the party and the unions is thrown back. Failure to defeat the right wing offensive could well lead to a real electoral debacle: Labour's right wing drift towards a coalition with the SDP/Liberal Alliance.

SOLIDARITY WITH SOLIDARNOSC!

There have been so many 'acid tests' for the left in recent years that socialists may have become rather blase about the term. But when the best advertisement for socialism that we have had for many years, the independent union movement Solidarnosc in Poland, comes under vicious repression, the lack of a serious left response is alarming.

At the level of world politics the Polish events are a stunning blow to the international labour movement, representing a serious setback for one of the two high points of the international workers' struggle — Poland and Central America. If the Polish rulers succeed in their aim of crushing the workers' resistance completely it will have profound implications for world politics — making increased US intervention into Central America much more probable, threatening to seriously undermine the mass anti-nuclear movements across Europe, and weakening the struggles of the workers the world over.

For over a month many on the left have kept virtually silent about the Polish events, often only breaking that silence to deplore the extent of the media coverage on the issue compared to other worthy causes. And the two biggest currents on the far left — *Socialist Worker* and *Militant* — are united in assessing that the Polish 'experiment' is all over, lessons should be drawn, and then back to business as usual.

We make no apology for giving over extensive space in this issue of International to discussing the Polish events and their impact on world politics, nor for having delayed publication of this issue to do so. There is growing evidence of a serious resistance against the repression — a resistance which deserves the maximum support from the whole labour movement. The Polish workers will have the last word.

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POLAND AND THE LEFT IN EUROPE

OLIVER MacDONALD

The imposition of martial law in Poland opened up a new phase in the extraordinary developments in Poland over the past two years. Oliver MacDonald argues that these events pose fundamental programmatic and strategic questions for socialists, in particular signalling the end of official Polish Communism as a movement with any sort ofworking class tradition.

The class character and role of Solidarity

It should be evident to all but the blind that Solidarity has been a mass, working class movement, based primarily on the industrial working class. This class character was shown tragically by the nature of the resistance that occurred after the military coup of 13 December. Open, active resistance came almost exclusively from the industrial workers and the miners, and it came massively and heroically. Even from the scanty reports that we have received, it is clear that every big plant in the country and all the main industrial centres were gripped by occupation strikes, despite the military junta's threats of execution for people engaging in such defiance. In the face of such evidence, it is contemptible to hear anyone calling themselves socialist trying to suggest that Solidarity has been in some sense an 'anti-working class' force.

At the same time, Solidarity was never simply a trade union, although many of its leaders, especially in the early days of its growth, sought vigorously to squeeze this great proletarian social movement into a purely trade union mould. If Solidarity had been simply a trade union it would not have grown so swiftly and massively, considering all the risks attendant on joining the organisation — Solidarity was recognised legally only in November 1980 and in its early days members were subject to considerable harassment. The movement expressed the national, democratic and egalitarian aspirations of the Polish workers. The industrial workers saw themselves as leading the entire nation in a movement to gain effective control over their own destiny. They saw Solidarity as the instrument through which all the people's hopes and interests could be defended.

This did not mean that the workers saw Solidarity as formally taking power. On the contrary, for most of the time when Solidarity was able to openly exist, its members hoped that the Communist Party leaders would continue in office while respecting the will of the only really authentic institution of the working people.

Those socialists who are suspicious of the national and democratic aspirations of Poland's workers only betray their own narrow, bureaucratic outlook. They for example fear that a movement for greater national autonomy could jeopardise the international position of the Soviet Union. The reverse is the case. One of the biggest threats to the Russian workers historically has been the smouldering discontent of working people throughout Eastern Europe over the humiliating and oppressive political control exercised over their destinies by the Soviet bureaucracy. While the consequent divisions between the Russian, Czech, Hungarian, Polish and East German workers continue to exist they provide a field day for imperialism in Eastern Europe. The rise of Solidarity offered the possibility of restoring real harmony and unity between the Russian and Polish peoples on the basis of allowing the Polish people to order their own affairs.

As to how this would have occurred if Solidarity's demands had been implemented, the Polish people would have made a giant leap towards a genuinely socialist and democratic society, a society with a nationalised economy under genuine popular control. Only sectarians can object that the workers' battle to exercise effective working class control over the economy was not phrased in Marxist terminology, a terminology utterly discredited by the oppression which it had served for so long. The productive forces in Poland under Gierek were being strangled by the bureaucratic dictatorship. Solidarity's demand for genuinely democratic control from below was the prerequisite for the development of the Polish economy.

The Communist Party: an instrument of a bureaucratic caste

The Polish events have yet again put to the test the character of the regimes in Eastern Europe. Many socialists in the West have tried to believe that these regimes are in some sense socialist, working class regimes, however distorted by bureaucratic privileges and authoritarian methods of rule.

It is certainly true that for the nationalised economies of Eastern Europe to function, it is necessary for the regimes to enlist disciplined co-operation from sections of the working class through drawing workers into the Communist Party. In Poland in the late 1970s some 46 per cent of the Communist Party's membership were thus officially classified as workers.

And the Polish events have yet again demonstrated that in a crisis involving independent working class action, the rank and file membership of the Communist Party responds to the movement from below, tends to join it, and seeks to re-orient the party leadership. This was shown in the growing rank and file 'anti-apparatus' movement inside the PUWP between the autumn of 1980 and the summer of 1981. But the Polish crisis has also revealed the inability of such rank and file movements to capture the centres of power within the Communist Party. It demonstrates that in essence these parties are subordinated to a state/party bureaucratic caste, a caste able to operate entirely autonomously from the party's rank and file.

The military coup[1] of 13 December demonstrates in the most dramatic and brutal way the autonomous grip which this bureaucratic caste has over the states of Eastern Europe. The coup demonstrates the readiness of this caste to escape altogether from the structures of the Communist Party itself and to exercise naked force not only against Solidarity and the working class but against its own party membership.

The role of the Soviet bureaucracy

With or without Poland's proximity to the Soviet Union, the bureaucratic caste in Warsaw would have resisted tooth and nail the working class upsurge in Poland. But it is very unlikely that they would have succeeded. Ever since August 1980 there has been systematic Soviet pressure on the Polish bureaucracy to go onto the offensive against the workers and break the back of Solidarity. The 13 December military coup was carried out with the closest co-operation of the chiefs of the Soviet Army. The KGB has been massively intervening in Polish politics throughout the entire crisis. Since the creation of Solidarity, the real battle has been that between the Polish workers and the Kremlin. The Polish workers were absolutely right to grasp the *national* character of their struggle.

The events in Poland give the lie to those on the left in the West who continue to imagine that the Soviet leadership has changed its spots and is ready to go along with any amount of domestic change in Eastern Europe provided it is not 'right-wing' and provided that it will not produce a government which is pro-American or 'neutral'. What dismayed the Soviet leadership was precisely the *working class character* of the movement in Poland, the fact that it presented a mortal threat to bureaucratic power and privilege throughout the region.

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Tanks break through the gates of the famous Lenin shipyard in Gdansk

At the same time, the Polish crisis demonstrated that the Soviet leadership was extremely reluctant to invade the country against the Polish government of the day. It, of course, has the military power to wipe the Poles off the map, but it understood the massive political price it would have to pay for such an invasion.

There are two possible explanations for why the bureaucracy delayed so long before unleashing violence against the Polish labour movement. The first is that the bureaucracy acted with restraint so long as the labour movement remained 'moderate' and under bureaucratic hegemony. The other is that it would not strike militarily until the labour movement had been weakened, thrown back on the defensive, divided and separated from various middle class layers.

There is overwhelming evidence that the second explanation is nearer the mark. Ever since November 1980, when the Soviet leadership had second thoughts about military invasion by the Warsaw Pact, the Kremlin embarked upon a policy of political destabilisation and economic strangulation in Poland. This carefully orchestrated campaign, making Polish politics lurch from one nerve-wracking confrontation to another, was conceived as a prolonged softening-up process in preparation for a crack-down to crush the independent labour movement.

Was there an alternative way out?

In future years, the Polish people and the left in the West will debate the painful question of whether there was a way by which Solidarity could have avoided the current crack-down. We will not argue this point in detail here, confining ourselves to a few general points.

There are many arguments to the effect that the Soviet Union lays down certain limits on change in Eastern Europe which must not be overstepped. This banal argument doesn't get us very far, certainly not beyond 15 August 1980, the day after the mass strike movement began in Gdansk. Solidarity vastly overstepped the Kremlin's 'limits' simply by *establishing* itself as an independent movement. The problem should rather be turned around the other way: were there limits that Solidarity could have imposed on the bureaucracy beyond those that it did establish?

There are those who believe that the coup was produced by the absence of one vital ingredient — 'goodwill'. If only there had been more of this and less 'extremism' on both sides, so the argument runs, all could have been well and an 'historic compromise' could have been achieved with national accord breaking out through the good offices of Jaruzelski, Glemp and Walesa.

When any profound social conflict explodes into violent confrontation such as the coup in Chile or the current Polish crisis, there are always those who believe that such events were produced by accident, misunderstanding or the wrong psychological approach on someone's part. All such explanations have the enormous advantage that they release their proponents from drawing any theoretical or political conclusions from what has happened. No general conclusions can be drawn, they argue, because it was all an historic mistake!

Marxists, on the other hand, are inclined to see violent conflicts in any society as the product of explosive social contradictions between antagonistic *social forces*. It is scarcely possible to deny the reality of this *social antagonism* in the acute struggles in Poland over the last 17 months. The so-called 'extremism' of such party leaders as Stefan Olszowski was in reality a consistent political expression of the social interests of the bureaucratic caste. And the 'extremism' inside Solidarity was not so much a product of small political groups but rather a relentless pressure for real solutions from the mass base of Solidarity.

There were hopes on both sides in the successful negotiation of a National Unity Front between the government and Solidarity in the months before the coup. But no serious observer of the Polish scene from any quarter could have doubted that such a 'national unity' would have been no more than a lull, a temporary halting of the open social struggle, or more likely simply a new form of continuation of the social struggle. Jaruzelski and Solidarity both approached such a front from the angle of horses and riders: Jaruzelski insisted on being the rider, in other words he saw the Front as a means of pushing Solidarity back and down onto all fours. Solidarity saw the Front as a means of ensuring that it could block any measures that the government tried to take that would be against the vital interests of the workers. The Front at best would not have been a solution to the basic problems, just a new way of posing them. And in the event the negotiations on the Front were used by Jaruzelski as a screen of hope behind which the forces of reaction could prepare themselves.

Solidarity could only have guaranteed its security by

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systematically unifying the mass movement round the perspectives for breaking up the bureaucratic apparatus and, either taking the power itself, or ensuring the formation of a broken-backed Communist Party government, whose capacity to resist Solidarity had been crushed.

If Solidarity's leaders had adopted such an alternative strategy and tactics it could have prevented the Polish bureaucracy from being able to successfully carry out a domestic military coup. This would then have presented the Soviet bureaucracy with a choice between an open invasion against the Polish People's Republic and an economic blockade. If it had chosen the former there could have been long-term, sustained mass national resistance. If it had chosen the latter strategy, then the question would have been whether the Western labour movements could have been mobilised to force their countries to give huge economic assistance to the Polish workers.

Given the state of political awareness in the Western labour movements about the significance of the Polish struggle and the attitude of the Western European bourgeoisies, it is an open question as to whether Poland's workers could have expected effective economic and political support from the West. For throughout the entire Polish crisis we have had the following paradoxical state of affairs in many Western European countries: inside the labour movement there was a fear among many socialists that perhaps Solidarity was in some way at least 'objectively' an aid to the Western bourgeoisies in their NATO campaign against the USSR; while within those bourgeoisies themselves there was strong support for the efforts of the Soviet and Polish bureaucracies to get on top of Solidarity and break the workers' movement.

The future course of events in Poland

The Stalinist bureaucracy must entirely break the will of the Polish working class in order to secure its own future. The industrial workers' fierce, open resistance to the coup over Christmas has been beaten back by wave after wave of terrible repression. But passive resistance remains strong and Solidarity's organisation is not crushed. Unless and until this is achieved — with the clandestine forces of Solidarity left as an isolated fragment without any organisational links with sections of the masses — all talk of Kadarisation[2] in Poland is nonsense.

There is a sickening discussion in the Western bourgeois press over whether it would be better for Jaruzelski to crush the Polish workers or for Moscow to do it. The Americans would prefer Moscow to crush the Polish workers because then they could break up West Germany's detente with Moscow and step up re-armament. The West German bourgeoisie wants Jaruzelski to do it for the opposite reason: so that they can say it is a purely internal Polish business that should not affect their relations with Moscow.

For the international labour movement, the issue is exactly the reverse: not how the Polish workers should be crushed, but how to aid them in throwing back their Soviet-Polish oppressors. It still cannot be ruled out that continued working class resistance will blow apart the military-bureaucratic junta and re-open a phase of mass political struggle in Poland. This we must hope and work for: down with the Jaruzelski-Brezhnev oppressors of the Polish workers! Unconditional solidarity with Solidarity and the mass resistance movement! This is the only internationalist, working class response to the Polish crisis.

But from what we know of events in Poland the working class has suffered a serious defeat and the military-bureaucratic caste will be able to survive the coming months. It has the backing of the neighbouring bureaucracies, of the Western European bourgeoisie and at the very least the passive neutrality of the Catholic Church hierarchy and a big part of the middle classes in Poland.

It will never be able to crush the *tradition* of Solidarity among the Polish workers. This tradition is now indestructible. We must do what we can to try to ensure that it will also not be able to crush the organised resistance movement: official labour movement material and moral assistance to this resistance movement will be vital over the whole of the next period.

One of the biggest issues will be how the regime intends to permanently break the thousands upon thousands of leaders of the movement. Kill off a few thousand in addition to the hundreds already dead? Put them in concentration camps for years? Export them to the West? It is not an easy question.

Another issue is what sort of channels the regime is going to establish in order to enable potential collaborators to pass over to the side of Jaruzelski with as little pain as possible. But before such channels can be securely put into place, the regime itself must reconstitute its own apparatus locally as well as nationally. In the first instance this apparatus can only comprise the corrupt and the mad-dogs of Stalinism, people ready to sink their teeth into whatever seems likely to gain *Pravda's* approval. These elements do not of course make for competent administration and their role will later be reduced to make way for more agile figures, such as those who read the wind wrongly and opportunistically tried to ingratiate themselves with the working class over the last six months.

But if the resistance continues strongly, the mad-dogs will have to be kept on and their incompetent revenge-style of bureaucratic rule will create problems for the central bureaucracy. Some of them are also likely to get bumped off by nationalist-terrorist groups, and others will find girders descending on their heads in steel plants. Such events will certainly not encourage the others to keep cool heads. Still, this is the price Moscow must be prepared to pay to hold on to power when official Communism is regarded as a stinking, filthy hangman by the workers.

Then there is the economic crisis. This is very useful to the bureaucracy when the main task is strangling the workers' movement. You can starve the workers out by sacking them from work and thus denying them ration cards while supplying a lot of the food through the factories rather than the shops. This is the tactic at the moment, apart from in Warsaw itself where foreign journalists and dignitaries are living. Elsewhere, the bureaucracy is prepared to disrupt production as much as necessary to crush the workers. While the struggle is on, to hell with economic recovery!

But for the middle classes and for the less determined sections of the workers, there must be some economic improvement if the bureaucracy wishes to stabilise its rule. And in conditions of international economic crisis and heavy strains on the Soviet and other Eastern European economies, this is not going to be easy. If it doesn't happen, then there is going to be continued ferment and unrest even if Solidarity's clandestine

resistance organisation is crushed. But the bureaucracy has reason to hope for substantial help from the capitalist classes in Western Europe.

Over all, if the military-bureaucratic junta is successful in crushing the workers, then we will see the emergence of the CP again and the withdrawal of the army leadership to the background — though probably not out of the political arena altogether — over the coming months. There will then be a long period of attempting to consolidate the satellite institutions of the bureaucracy locally and nationally, and this will last for years. Then there will, of course, be an attempt at Kadarisation.

As we have argued, the fundamental reality of the Polish crisis has been the struggle between the bureaucratic state-party apparatus of Moscow-Warsaw on the one hand and the industrial workers on the other. Any illusion that there can be a middle way when the military-bureaucratic apparatus has launched terror against the workers is ridiculous. All political currents in Poland must base themselves on one or other of these two forces. Until this battle has been decisively won by either side no 'compromise', intermediate, 'liberal' regime is possible. On this question of principle, there is no difference whatever between Rakowski, Jaruzelski, Olszowski and Siwak. There is confusion and difference of opinion only on tactics for enforcing the principles of the counter-revolution.

Rakowski and Siwak can perhaps argue the toss over such matters as the sentence that should be meted out to Edward Gierek — a man guilty of far less crimes against Poland's workers than the sickening hypocrites of the Rakowski type now presiding over the worst terror seen in Poland since the Nazi occupation during the war.

Our defence of the rights of the Polish people is unconditional

The upheaval in Poland over the last two years has taken place against a darkening international background primarily caused by the renewed drive for world hegemony on the part of US imperialism both under Carter and then Reagan. The US war preparations pose a real medium term threat of global war and of a regional nuclear war in Europe.

This US drive has led to an enormous mass movement throughout Europe against NATO's nuclear re-armament, undoubtedly the most positive political development in European politics at the present time. But the menace of Reaganism and Thatcherism sometimes leads socialists into a superficial response which involves ignoring every political question except the nuclear threat, or worse, a response which involves supporting all those who publicly oppose the US policy — for example the Soviet leadership itself. Solidarity did not loudly oppose Cruise and Pershing missiles, Brezhnev did: therefore... so this superficial reasoning goes. And this line of thought is but a short step from the following: let us strengthen the main organised bulwark against the USA, the Soviet leadership, against everything that appears to weaken it, such as the struggle of the Poles for national rights and democratic rights.

On the other hand, an equally fallacious line of reasoning is pursued by some of those who are most deeply committed to Solidarity. It is easy for them to start playing down the menace of Reaganism and even to see the USSR as the main threat to the working people of Europe.

Both approaches ignore the most fundamental fact for socialists: that lasting peace, democratic rights and economic progress in Europe require much more than successfully blocking Cruise and Pershing, and much more than successfully blocking Soviet intervention in Poland. They require international socialism, a united socialist Europe embracing both halves of the continent. This historic goal will not only mark the culmination of European history, it will also mark the beginning of the end of the power of US imperialism and the threat of war that it carries.

It is in the perspective of this positive historic objective that socialists should view both the upsurge of the Polish working class and the growing peace movement in Europe. Both these movements have been powerful levers in the struggle for a united socialist states of Europe. It would be utterly self-defeating for socialists to try to use one of these levers against the other or to see one as detracting from the other. Insofar as the working people of Poland gain their rights and win control over their own affairs, this would be a springboard from which the workers of surrounding countries could leap forward towards power.

The one great benefit which socialism and only socialism provides is that it enables all the economic, social and political oppressions of the existing world to be overcome. This is what enables the socialist movement to root itself indestructibly in the mass of people, because only socialism brings full democratic control, full national equality and full social equality into being. Those socialists therefore who oppose or remain neutral over the national and democratic struggles of the Polish people in the name of international tactical requirements of the struggle for 'socialism' are cutting their own throats. The real task for socialists is to find the way of combining and uniting all the disparate and often superficially conflicting progressive movements in Europe into one common river of advance.

This is no easy task, as we can see if we remember that the Sandinistas have supported the Jaruzelski coup and if we also remember that many people in Eastern Europe totally fail to grasp the vital need to give unconditional support to the na-

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tional liberation movements in the Third World. It is a task that requires more than propaganda: it requires organisation, and adequate tactical skill on the part of socialists so that they can find the shortest practical route to international unity. But such tactics must be geared to achieving real unity on the basis of the progressive aspirations of each section of the working class throughout the world.

Our support for the Polish people's right to self-determination is *unconditional*. This support is in no way altered by the fact that in the event of a war between the USA and the USSR we would unconditionally defend the rights and future of the Russian workers. What it does mean is that we would have nothing to do with the pro-American political forces that would want to use the oppression of the Poles in the service of a war to crush the Russian people; nor would we have anything to do with pro-Kremlin forces that wished to use the issue of defending the Russian workers as a means of justifying and perpetuating Kremlin domination of the Poles.

Eastern and Western Europe after the Polish crackdown

With such general considerations in mind, we must consider the present international context of the Polish crisis and how it will affect political developments in Eastern and Western Europe in coming years.

The underlying problem that Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union have faced for more than a decade has been the general decline in the rate of growth of the Eastern European and Soviet economies. In essence, this decline is linked to two basic features of these economies: the barrier to their growth imposed by the fact that they remain surrounded by a world capitalist market that continues to possess a higher level of productivity of labour than Comecon; secondly, the rule over these societies by bureaucratic castes which makes impossible the voluntary mobilisation of the working class in economic life, and which also blocks the development of a rational division of labour and co-operation within Comecon.

With the impossibility of the Soviet bureaucracy voluntarily liquidating itself and its satellite bureaucracies, there has been no chance of resolving the second problem. The result was to push the regimes more and more towards participating on the world capitalist market in order to stem the economic stagnation. And given that rising living standards are a traditional mechanism for ensuring political stability for the bureaucratic castes in Eastern Europe, this has acted as a growing spur to participation in the world capitalist economy. The most dramatic example of this economic swing towards the West was the policy adopted by the Gierek government in Poland. But it applied also to the Hungarians and the East Germans. If this policy was pursued to its logical conclusion it would lead to the break-up of Comecon and the pulling of some Eastern European states inexorably into the imperialist economic sphere, with all the potential repercussions for international politics and for domestic social arrangements that would follow.

In the field of economic policy, the Soviet leadership in the 1970s did not block this Eastern European turn to the West by administrative fiat — it was, after all, making the same turn itself. But it did try to campaign and offer economic incentives to Eastern Europe for greater Comecon integration. These incentives basically boil down to sacrificing Soviet domestic growth for the sake of the continued Soviet political hegemony over Eastern Europe.

The Soviet leadership has been prepared to develop an economic relationship with Eastern Europe that gives the Soviet economy almost a classical colonial relationship with the economies of East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary; the Soviet Union supplies these economies with raw materials at prices generally much cheaper than those on the world market; and in return the Soviet economy imports manufactured goods from Eastern Europe of a quality largely considerably inferior to those it could obtain on the world capitalist market. True, the Soviet economy has the advantage of the fact that this trade is carried on in roubles rather than Western currencies. But overall, the arrangement involves an unfavourable set of exchanges for the Soviet economy in world capitalist market terms.

The second response of the Kremlin to this pressure from the world capitalist market was to take measures to ensure greater political co-operation from the Western European bourgeoisies — in essence a guarantee that they would not try any monkey-business in the Soviet sphere designed to destabilise Soviet political control there. This was a central feature of Brezhnev's so-called 'peace programme' unveiled at the start of the 1970s.

What has happened during the last decade has been that the Hungarian, Polish and East German economies have become deeply involved in economic relations with the West and particularly with the West Germans. So great has this involvement become that both the Poles and the Hungarians have applied this winter to join the IMF — evidently against Soviet wishes.

Further, under Carter and then Reagan, the Americans have turned towards a policy of causing political trouble for the USSR in Eastern Europe, as well as trying to pull the West Germans in the same direction. The Polish crisis has brought all these problems to a head, for the Kremlin. If it sharply pulled the Eastern European economies away from their deepening economic relations with the West, this would either create a gigantic strain on the Soviet economy in its efforts to fill the vacuum; or it would lead to a dramatic economic crisis in the Hungarian and East German economies, or it would do both. And in Poland both would certainly occur. On the other hand, if the Soviet leaders allow the economic trends of the 1970s to continue in the new political atmosphere of the 1980s, a point could come where a government in Bonn closely aligned to the US would have the economic and political leverage to prise some of the Eastern European states out of Comecon altogether.

The Polish coup has forced these problems into the open. Now that the Soviet leadership has regained a secure power-base in Poland, political logic requires a massive injection of Soviet economic aid to revive the economy and pay off Poland's most pressing debts. In this way the Polish bureaucracy can hope to regain some sort of tacit support from sections of the population. On the other hand the Soviet economy is itself very overstretched domestically, and also in the very favourable terms it is offering to other Eastern European economies. So economic logic suggests establishing the right political basis and climate for massive Western economic aid to Poland. However, the problem here is the deterioration in Soviet relations with the USA and the very precarious state of relations between Moscow and Bonn. If the Soviet Union further opens the Polish economy to the West and Bonn then swings back under US hegemony with the present type of leadership in Washington, it could produce a convulsive and dangerous crisis for the Soviet leadership in East Central Europe in the next few years.

If we then turn to the attitude of the imperialist powers towards the Polish crisis and Eastern Europe in its aftermath, we find considerable political turmoil. During the last couple of decades the USA has lost its overwhelming ascendancy within the imperialist camp as West Germany and Japan have grown in strength, outstripping the USA in labour productivity, and engaging in a growing rivalry with the USA in the economic field.

In addition, West Germany used the fact that the USA was bogged down in Vietnam and seeking a wide-scale deal with Moscow at the start of the 1970s to break out of its own dependent status vis-a-vis the US through Ostpolitik[3]. By this means West Germany has been able to increasingly assert itself in the field of international politics and to establish itself in a pivotal position between Washington and Moscow — the position that the British fatuously dreamed of occupying until the end of the MacMillan era, and that which de Gaulle temporarily assumed.

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With the American global counter-offensive to re-establish its hegemonic position in all fields, the West German bourgeoisie has been thrown onto the political defensive. It desperately wants to maintain its new, extensive field for economic operations in Eastern Europe and to use Soviet fuel supplies to extend its independence from US-controlled Middle East oil. In the political field its pivotal role in East-West relations depends upon there being some possibility of mediation between Washington and Moscow. If there is head-on general confrontation between the two, Bonn is faced with an agonising choice between knuckling under to Washington altogether and breaking up the NATO alliance as West Germany swings into a new Rapallo[4] with Moscow.

The military take to the Warsaw streets

The Polish coup has brought this struggle between Washington and Bonn almost to a breaking point. The US drive to install Pershing and Cruise missiles in West Germany is another flash-point in the same struggle. Washington's sanctions against the USSR were in reality as much directed at Bonn as at Moscow. Reagan has given the impression that he wants to force Bonn either to savage its own economic and political interests or to go with Moscow against the other main NATO powers. Bonn on the other hand is trying to rally the Common Market countries behind the twin banners of continued detente and business as usual with Eastern Europe. So far there has been a patched up compromise. But Washington is playing the Polish crisis for all its worth in a ruthless fashion against its West German ally.

This struggle in the West is, of course, a matter of great concern to the Soviet leadership and one of a number of bold moves by the Soviets could decisively affect the outcome of the Bonn-Washington conflict. But the Soviet leadership does not seem to have made up its mind which moves to make.

Strategic choices facing the Kremlin

Since at least the beginning of the 1970s and in some respects for much longer, the Soviet leadership has sought to defend its own power internationally through co-operation with the USA. For the deeply conservative bureaucrats in the Kremlin surveying a world in menacing turmoil, the attractions of the prospect of world management by the two super-powers are overwhelming. Through both having an enormous military (nuclear) superiority over all other powers and then agreeing on each others' vital interests and spheres of control, the bureaucratic caste's position can, so they hoped, be shored up, while anybody trying to upset the apple-cart can be accused of threatening 'world peace'!

Like other 'mini historic compromises' such as the Italian effort, this world historic compromise between the super-powers rests on the shakiest possible foundations — antagonistic social bases. Harmony at the top is disrupted by class struggle down below and soon enough each partner at the top gets suspicious that the other may be stoking the fires of class struggle in his camp. Compromise disintegrates into confrontation.

Forces that have little or nothing to do with the hand of Leonid Brezhnev have shaken and weakened the US, so Washington is turning towards confrontation. So far the Kremlin has not irrevocably given up its search for renewed collaboration with Washington. Some advisors there undoubtedly favour its continuation. But the China card has been a dirty blow in Moscow's eyes and so has the new US arms race. And the human rights campaign followed by the US offensive over Poland have all further alarmed Moscow.

The time may be approaching when the Soviet leadership feels it should abandon co-operative efforts with Washington and go on a political counter-offensive by making a serious bid for the West Germans (and the Japanese and Chinese?) If the Russians wished to do so, they could take a number of steps: on condition that West Germany task a 'responsible' line in Poland and Eastern Europe, easing economic strains by pumping in funds, while strongly backing Soviet control of the area, Moscow could 'unconditionally' withdraw SS20s thus enabling Bonn to sweep the board against the Americans in the political battle over re-armament in the West; it could also take a major initiative towards the neutralisation of central Europe or towards further drawing together of the two Germanies; it could also offer massive new investment openings in Siberia with a less stringent limitation of private capitalist investment there. As US pressure mounts on the West Germans, some such moves may become necessary for the Kremlin simply to maintain the stable relationship that it has had with Bonn over the last decade.

Why the Kremlin has not moved in this direction before now (at least since the early 1950s in its efforts then to halt German re-armament) is because such a move would break the Yalta agreements and open up a period of acute turmoil throughout Europe. Such upheavals would not be at all popular in Moscow, but if the US offensive continues they could become a lesser evil than a re-arming, aggressive USA.

A socialist European strategy after Poland

There are those on the left who believe that socialism can be achieved in this or that single European country in a 'cold', stable international framework: socialism and working class power within the framework of NATO! Or socialism and democratic working class power in the framework of a stable Warsaw Pact in Eastern Europe! The Polish crisis on one side and events such as those in Greece, Spain or Turkey in recent years should surely demonstrate that such ideas are a complete illusion.

Another illusion on the left is that even if socialist advance in Western Europe faces bitter opposition from other NATO powers, and above all from the USA, at least it will be looked upon favourably by the Kremlin (there is a similar illusion in Eastern Europe that a democratic version of a planned economy in Eastern Europe will be welcomed by the Kremlin). In reality, the Soviet leadership combines resolute determination to maintain its own control over Eastern Europe with an equally vigorous defence of the West European bourgeoisies' right to rule Western Europe. It does so for exactly the same reason that the West has respected Yalta in the East; a genuinely socialist, democratic workers' state in Western Europe would be no more welcome in Moscow than Solidarity in power would be welcomed in Bonn.

Thus, socialists are not at all in favour of what either Moscow or Washington mean when they speak of the need for 'stability' in Europe. Such 'stability' is a code word for the status quo. Socialism will come to Europe only through considerable political turmoil and upheaval across the continent. And a key strategic necessity in the international struggle for socialism in Europe is the need for a link-up between the workers of Eastern and Western Europe. Such a link up has nothing in common with the anti-Yalta propaganda of NATO which means rolling back Eastern Europe and which could only be achieved over the corpses of workers on both sides of the divided continent.

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But the reason why such a link up between the labour movements of the West and workers in Eastern Europe is so vital is that it destroys the main political weapon used by both the Kremlin and Washington against mass movements in their sector: that such movements are the creature of the other superpower (e.g. Solidarity = CIA, CND = CPSU).

There are various weak links in the European international power structure that have appeared at various times: Yugoslavia and the South European road that was visible in the late 1940s with the revolution in Greece, the Tito-Stalin break, and the weak position of Italian capitalism. These could surface again and socialists look with hope at the progress of the labour movement in Greece. Another weak link was the powerful socialist tradition in the Czech working class which surfaced in 1968 and, if consolidated, would have had a gigantic impact on the working class in Western Europe. And then there has been the libertarian, national tradition of the Polish workers producing Solidarity, which could have had a powerful radicalising effect on the labour movements of the West, which in turn could have had a feed-back effect in other Eastern European working classes.

The defeat of Solidarity, if it is successfully carried through by the Jaruzelski dictatorship, is a serious blow to the struggle for socialism in Europe. But it will only be a temporary defeat, and it is vital that socialists in Western Europe seek to use the coming period to ensure that when Poland's workers rise again they will have renewed confidence in the fact that they will have strong support from Western Europe's labour movements — much more so than they received over the last 16 months.

In the meantime, the battle between the imperialist powers in the West and the pressures on the Kremlin may open up one of the biggest sleeping socialist volcanoes in the continent, the biggest potential fissure of all in the pattern of anti-Socialist power in Europe: the German question. If Moscow and Bonn are pushed together by the economic and political pressures discussed above, powerful undercurrents may again come to the surface of working class consciousness in the two halves of Germany, the undercurrents of hope in a United Socialist Germany breaking from both Washington and Moscow and becoming the cornerstone of a United Socialist Europe.

In East Germany such hopes remain strong inside the working class and an underground Marxist socialist culture remains strong. In West Germany, socialist consciousness and organisation is far weaker. But the peace and anti-nuclear movements there contain the seeds of a movement for a united and socialist Germany, and such seeds could grow rapidly in the sort of international conditions that may develop in Europe in coming years.

But for socialist advance to take place and for the labour movement to grow stronger in Western Europe in the immediate period, militant, practical and political support for the Polish workers is necessary. This is vital not only for the Polish workers, but also so that the labour movements in the West should not lose the trust of the broad masses of working people, who are both horrified by the repression in Poland, and, also subjected to a barrage of bourgeois anti-socialist propaganda as a result.

The Polish crisis will further exacerbate the crisis of Stalinism in Western Europe, weakening the hold of the CPs within the working class and strengthening the position of the Socialist Parties within the labour movements of most Western European countries.

The main Stalinist party in Western Europe, the French Communist Party, will suffer greatly from the SP onslaught over Poland which is likely to be a protracted offensive as the Polish crisis continues. In addition, the Polish crisis has opened up a deep gulf between the PCF and the Italian CP which has moved further from Stalinism in a major ideological break with Moscow. Thus the PCI will move further down the road of social democratisation. More and more the politics of the Western European labour movements will be dominated by the politics of the Socialist Parties and of left, non-Stalinist trends within them.

As the crisis of German-American relations deepens the Socialist Party leaderships in Europe will themselves tend to divide between those leaning towards the Americans and those tending towards the West Germans. The former will back the nuclear re-armament of Europe and will combine this with a strongly anti-Soviet line. The pro-West German leaderships will on the contrary try to stick with what they call 'detente' — some independence from Washington over global nuclear strategy and the broadening of business with the Soviet Union. These divisions will run both between and within parties in each Western European country.

The workers of Western Europe rightly see the main international threat at the present time as coming from a re-arming of US imperialism. The huge mass movement against the imposition of Cruise and Pershing missiles is the most important and positive international movement in Europe today. If the left can destroy this US drive and go forward towards the entire break-up of NATO this will be the biggest advance for the working class in the East and West for decades. It will be a body-blow to global imperialist strategy and it will also defeat those forces in Eastern Europe hoping to use the NATO re-armament drive to crush all opposition in Eastern Europe in a new Cold War hysteria.

At the same time, a realistic socialist strategy must also involve militant and unconditional support for the struggles of the workers of Eastern Europe against Stalinism. The 16 months of Solidarity's open existence in Poland was a tremendous opportunity for the left in the whole of Europe, but the bulk of the socialist forces failed to recognise it or to respond adequately. The defeat of Solidarity, if it is consolidated, will be a terrible blow to socialist advance throughout the continent. But the lessons of this defeat must not be lost within the Western left. A massive, militant defence of Solidarity in coming months must be combined with a vigorous explanation of the real role of the Soviet regime in relationship to the struggle for socialism in Europe.

Footnotes

(1) It would, of course, be wrong to see the takeover of 13 December as a move by the officer corps of the Polish Army against the civilian leadership of the Polish United Workers' Party. In reality, it was a move by a political faction in both the civilian party leadership and the party elite in the armed forces against not only Solidarity and the Polish people but also the party membership. The centre of decision-making since the coup has been an 8-man directorate comprising 4 civilian party leaders and 4 military leaders, but this body seems to have been constructed after the actual coup itself.

Thus, the pattern of the Polish coup is not identical with that of military coups in Latin America which generally involve military officers in consultation with big capitalists or landlords outside the state machine; it has more in common with the sort of military coups that have taken place or been attempted in some Arab countries: for example, coups in Syria in the 1960s organised by the Baath Party with a faction of the officer corps organised in the Baath Party setting up a public military council behind which ruled a shadowy political leadership made up of both civilian and military chiefs of the party. Soviet experience in the Middle East would certainly have made them familiar with this type of operation.

(2) Kadarisation, after the name of the general secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party (CP), Janos Kadar, refers to the process by which an initial savage repression of the working class is followed by a purge of the backwoods Stalinists and a liberalisation from above. The liberalisation in Hungary has also been associated with economic decentralisation and an opening of the economy to the West. But it should also be remembered, that the period of heavy repression under Kadar went on from 1956 until 1962-3 and something like liberalisation only really began to be visible in the late 1960s.

(3) Ostpolitik — West German policy of breaking down the economic, political and cultural barriers to the Eastern bloc, pioneered by Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt.

(4) Rapallo — the 1922 economic treaty between Soviet Russia and West Germany.

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ON THE EVE OF MARTIAL LAW

ZBIGNIEW KOWALEWSKI

The following is an account published in *Le Monde* by Zbigniew Kowalewski of the situation in Poland and the discussions taking place within the union just prior to the imposition of martial law. Kowalewski was in Paris at the time of the military crackdown.

On the afternoon of 2 December the Solidarnosc leadership presidium of Lodz region met in emergency session. We were shocked by the news received from the Warsaw union information service just before the cutting of the telephone lines of the Mazowsze regional leadership. The police and the army had attacked the firefighters' college and had thrown out the striking students. The vice president of the regional branch of the union was arrested. In all the factories in our region the Solidarnosc militants were already on a strike alert.

One hour later, Andrzej Slowik, regional president of the union, was to leave for Warsaw to participate in the presidium meeting of the national commission called at short notice by Lech Walesa. We set out the position that he should put forward, after having taken a quick evaluation of the situation throughout the country. One conclusion was obvious: we were probably coming to a full-blown revolutionary crisis.

If there really was to be a frontal attack on the union by the authorities then we had to counter-attack. In Warsaw, Slowik was therefore to put forward an action proposal to the union: an active strike combined with the creation of workers' guards. In the hours which followed the political tension tended to recede at a national level. We nevertheless came to the conclusion in the following days that the crisis already had a revolutionary character. We had maintained our action programme, defining at the same time our concept of national accord. The vice-president Jerzy Kropiwnicki — a doctor of economics, and one of the three intellectuals on the nine-person presidium — put our position in writing.

For two months the leaders of the PUWP (Polish United Workers Party) were carrying out a campaign for the creation of a Front of National Unity, an institution totally controlled by the party in power, which had no existence outside of electoral periods to present a single list of candidates and to sort out the problem of the composition of the representative bodies. The conception of the Front varied according to the leading PUWP members one spoke to, which implied differences between them, even a factional struggle.

But they were agreed on one point: to avoid all discussion on the content of any possible agreement. For them the first thing was to set up the Front; there would be time later to work out the basis of the accord between the different forces taking part in it. We foresaw the trap. It was to deprive Solidarnosc of its autonomy and to tie its hands.

Our position was thus the following: no to the Front, yes to the accord. The content of the accord was to be determined by three forces: the state power, the Church, whose moral authority no one doubted, and Solidarnosc, as the principal social movement. Other forces were to undertake to support the agreement whose fundamentals could only be the propositions adopted by the Solidarnosc congress. Concretely the agreement was to contain three points: the struggle against the crisis, the carrying out of the economic reform, and the establishment of a self-governing Republic.

For free elections

Kropiwnicki and myself were to take part in a discussion on this question with representatives of the PUWP in a broadcast televised nationwide. The political bureau of the PUWP — we knew from an official source — had agreed to this debate, insisting that we should not pull out. We were on the point of leaving for the studio when the director general of Lodz television phoned us to say that the broadcast was cancelled, the PUWP refusing to participate.

The day before, on 3 December, during the presidium meeting of the national commission at Radom, Lech Walesa and numerous other leaders, convinced as we were in Lodz of the revolutionary character of the situation, had for the first time posed the question: who should rule? A bureaucratic minority or the working masses? For several months this question had been ripening within the working class, posing at the same time the fundamental problem of the Polish revolution. That is what the workers told us during the factory meetings, demanding that we struggle for free elections.

For the regional leadership of Solidarnosc the most urgent problem was the struggle for supplies for the population. For several months the built-up industrial area of Lodz was threatened by hunger. The system of regulating the basic necessities had more or less broken down for the two months since July, the time when the famous hunger march of thirty thousand women had taken place at the initiative of the union. But we were not satisfied with protest actions.

After having examined the working of the regulations we were sure that the disorganisation was absolutely scandalous. The provincial administration was incapable of determining the exact number of people entitled to ration cards. The cards were secretly distributed to people belonging to a group with links with the apparatus of government. No one was checking on the destruction of the cards once used; some of them were coming back into circulation. The result: to get something in exchange for the cards one had to queue up for a whole day, sometimes two or three days. For workers in particular the situation was tragic.

In October the leadership of Lodz Solidarnosc had demanded that the printing of the ration cards in our region be decentralised. Social tensions and the risks of an outbreak of strikes were such that the town hall obtained such authorisation from central government. We are the only region in the country where the ration cards were from then on printed by Solidarnosc according to a system determined by us and controlled by a joint commission of the union and the town hall. At last the number of cards printed corresponded to social needs, established in a precise fashion.

At the same time we controlled the distribution of the cards, which put an end to privileges. And we won another success too. The central government had refused Solidarnosc the right to control the distribution of basic necessities, arguing that it would constitute an interference in the prerogatives of the government. (As vice-premier Rakowski said to Lech Walesa: 'In our country he who controls food distribution, thereby holds the power.')

In our region we already had such control! The mayor of Lodz had given us the authorisation. Special teams of workers controlled the situation in collection centres in the countryside, in the slaughterhouses, in the warehouses, and in the wholesale and retail trades. The union had not been authorised to control the warehouses of the State reserves. But that did not prevent us from knowing exactly the type and quantity of goods there. We could also give the mayor the information which he said himself he did not know.

Solidarnosc being everywhere, the authorities found it more and more difficult to prevent us obtaining information on the state of the economic situation. Thanks to our activity the supplies to the population improved and the queues shortened. We had already prepared a plan setting up control of industrial pro-

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duction in the region.

The Solidarnosc union in Lodz was the first in Poland to enthusiastically support the idea of workers' self-management in January 1981 and to put forward the slogan: power to the workers in the factories. We had supported the establishment of regional co-ordinating committees of the workers' councils — already in existence in 26 regions — as well as the activity of the national federation of self-management bodies set up last October.

Freezing of the economic reform

All the independent economists in the country were agreed in saying that Poland would be unable to get out of the crisis without liquidating the system of bureaucratic centralisation of the economy. This view was widely shared by the working class. The government had promised to put the economic reform into motion by 1 January 1982. This had aroused great expectations among the workers. But in November the government admitted that it was impossible to embark on the reform during 1982. It thus renounced its own project, itself very limited in scope.

The government intended that parliament should pass a law on a system of economic reform. But the Bill was subject to such attacks that the government was not certain that it would be adopted. And, to everyone's surprise, it was replaced by a decree from the council of ministers on the matter, without Solidarnosc being consulted. The old system of management was to remain in place for the year to come, with an even greater centralisation in some respects. A special body of the state apparatus was to retain the monopoly on the distribution of raw materials and all the important materials for production.

The decision of the government stirred up agitation and extreme discontent in the factories. 'We should put the economic reform into motion ourselves, without and against the authorities if necessary.' That was the increasingly widespread view among the Lodz workers in their factory meetings and in the regional meetings of the self-management movement militants. In the regional leadership of the union we were convinced that the only way out for the working class was the active strike.

An active strike is putting production under the control of the strike committees according to a plan elaborated by the workers themselves according to social need. It would allow not only the control of distribution by revolutionary methods but also would deprive the central bureaucracy of its economic power, it would start the economic reform being put into practice and also the socialisation of the means of production. On 23 October the national commission recommended to the whole union to prepare for an active strike.

This warning caused a panic within the state apparatus. First General Jaruzelski, then *Trybuna Ludu*, the paper of the PUWP, and finally the secretary to the Central Committee Olszowski, took part in a campaign against the tactic of an active strike. They announced that the government would use every means at its disposal to prevent it taking place. However the slogan of the strike became increasingly popular in the rank and file of the union. In the Lodz region a survey showed that 65 per cent of the union members — and more than 85 per cent in certain big factories — supported this form of struggle. Nevertheless some of the members and of the experts of the national commission opposed it, or at least had doubts. One of the principal experts went so far as to say that it was an idea originating from leftist elements. The differences on this were very similar to those some months earlier which affected Solidarnosc over workers' self-management.

On 9 December, six presidium members of the Lodz regional leadership met with the workers in the twelve principle factories in mass meetings. They discussed there the active strike, the formation of workers' guards and measures to struggle against the sabotage of production. The overwhelming majority of the workers supported the adoption of such forms of action.

On the evening we met with Solidarnosc representatives from the neighbouring regions. The meeting took place outside the offices of the regional leadership as we feared being overheard. We told them that our region would probably go on active strike on a wide scale from 21 December and we asked them to support our action, above all by assuring the supplies to the population of Lodz.

That's when I discussed with Andrzej Slowik for the last time. He was to go to Gdansk during the night to ask the national union leadership to authorise the organisation of an active strike in our region.

This bus driver, a leader of the Lodz strike in August 1980 and for a long time one of the most combative and radical of the national leaders of Solidarnosc, had always shown a great capacity to grasp the sentiment of his class. As I was to leave the next day for France for ten days by the request of the presidium, I told him as I left that he should supervise in my absence the preparation of the active strike.

On the morning of 10 December on the train to Warsaw I noticed that the paper of the provincial committee of the PUWP — which is more liberal than the central press of the party — had published my article polemicising with *Trybuna Ludu* over the active strike. I argued there that Solidarnosc, in preparing for an active strike — that is in fighting for everyone's right to food, clothes and heating — and in struggling to safeguard the instruments of work, had a clear moral superiority over a government, incapable of doing anything other than preparing for war against society.

In Lodz, we could clearly see that as the crisis of the bureaucracy deepened so it increasingly turned to its own apparatus of repression as the only force on which it could rely. The militarisation of the government was obvious. Nevertheless we placed our confidence in the struggle of the masses to block this process. In March throughout the country Solidarnosc was very well prepared for a general strike. The government thus had a choice: to be overturned or to convince the union leaderships to accept a compromise.

In December the government was ready to launch a war against society — it had been preparing it for at least ten months — but it knew that its strongest card was surprise. It was to prevent Solidarnosc from preparing for a general strike. In a region like Lodz, which had decided to go on active strike, Solidarnosc was able to choose the terrain and the moment for the confrontation with the government. The events of 13 December have shown that the bureaucracy was so afraid of such a possibility that it took the initiative.

CND: 'IT IS POSSIBLE TO WIN'

Interview with Joan Ruddock

At the last national conference of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament Joan Ruddock was elected national chairperson. Her background is one of LabourParty politics. She has been active in the Party for 11 years. She became interested in CND, in a major way, when the decision was taken to site 96 Cruise missiles at Greenham Common, near Newbury, Berkshire, which was in the constituency for which she stood as a Labour candidate at the last election. Brian Heron interviewed her about her views on CND, its policies, and how she sees its development over the next few years.

Photo: ED BARBER

How would you account for the tremendous support for CND at the present time reflected in the official support of the Labour Party and the TUC for unilateral nuclear disarmament. Why should this occur in the 1980s and not in the 1960s?

I do not think anyone is sure of the answer. We see it as a consequence of various decisions having been taken within NATO which have allowed us as a campaign to put to the people of the country, for the first time, the whole question of deterrents. When CND was campaigning last time round, even though it was possible to argue that nuclear weapons were immoral, it was also logical for many people that there should be a balance between the two sides and that such a balance deterred us from using nuclear weapons.

I think many people were prepared to accept that argument and therefore rejected CND. This time round we have been able to say that is not the game that the superpowers are playing. We are not in the business of nuclear deterrents. We have been able to demolish that very powerful argument. People are now seeing the logic of our argument that it is not possible to defend yourself successfully with nuclear weapons.

What convinced you that CND can be successful?

I cannot say that it will be successful. I can only say that the indications are there. The government seems at a loss to come up with any credible policy which demolishes our argument. So I am confident that if we can get the kind of growth we have seen in the movement, the kind of understanding of the issues we have among our grassroots supporters, then there is not at the present time any reason to believe that we continue this growth. If we maintain the growth then it is possible to win, because we depend on creating a very, very, large movement which has got significant support in the trade unions and that in itself will be powerful enough to change public opinion and ultimately challenge government policy.

Many in the movement, and outside for that matter, would argue that the nuclear strategy of the government is part and parcel of its foreign policy and that to tackle that is to challenge one of the key props in the existence of the government?

You are absolutely right. You cannot separate nuclear weapons from the whole apparatus of foreign policy, from the question of alliances and even from the Cold War. So if CND is to win it is actually going to have to put itself in a position whereby its very action of saying we will not have nuclear weapons, and getting a government prepared to accept that policy, opens up our society to major change and poses a very great threat to the whole establishment.

How do you see the decisions of the recent CND conference fitting into this perspective?

I think that the important decisions are the ones about establishing workplace branches and making a priority of work within the unions. That clearly can take us forward if it is a success. There is no doubt that the movement wants to do it and if we are successful in getting rank and file support, and we have that support at the top, then that makes it possible for us to look at a campaign of real opposition so that, for example, we could have workers unwilling to participate in the processes associated with nuclear weaponry whether it is building and transporting them or with communication systems.

But what about the argument that often comes up that in a period of such economic strain it is unrealistic to expect the workers at the base to take action on such an issue. Is it not the case that they would say that it is irrelevant to the business of maintaining a job?

I think it depends on whether the workplace branches are able to explore fully the question of alternative uses for their workplaces and whether they can look into transforming their industry for peaceful use. As you know some people have tried that with very little success. It seems very good on paper and Lucas Aerospace is a prime example but in practice it has been impossible to make progress.

I am encouraged because I know armaments workers. I live very close to Aldermaston and RAF Burghfield where they make nuclear warheads and I know for a fact that there are workers there talking of using their skills to do other things. If the workers felt that there was some way in which such a transformation would occur, if they felt that they were part of a campaign that would win, then I think they would be prepared to take the action. But it would not be action of a negative kind. For them it would be action to stop one process and start another.

In the end do you think that it is going to come down to finding

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a government which is prepared to make these sort of transformations and what do you think the prospects are of the Labour Party forming such a government?

The movement needs the conference decisions of the Labour Party to be implemented and we need that to happen whether the Labour Party forms a government or not. We need to feel that the leaders of the Labour Party actually mean to put into practice what they have said. We need the Labour Party to go to the electorate on a unilateral platform next time round. If you ask me whether they will then I am now far less sure. In fact I am more pessimistic as compared to my optimism of six months ago.

E P Thompson in a recent Guardian article suggests we run on two track pressure for multilateral negotiation and pressure for unilateral disarmament against our own governments. Where would you place your emphasis?

Definitely on unilateral disarmament. As I understand it multilateral talks have not been very successful. They are all about arms control; they are not actually about moving one single weapon from anywhere; they are not about reducing the numbers in any significant way. My priority, like I think most CND people, is definitely for unilateral disarmament.

What is your view of the argument that a confrontation in Poland actually threatens world peace? Is that a valid argument and where do you stand?

I think the struggle in Poland is certainly a threat to world peace because I don't think anyone can be sure how that struggle can be contained and by that I mean, will the people of Poland and the Polish government be able to sort it out for themselves and come to some peaceful solution. Clearly if they are not able to do so or the Soviet Union feels they are not doing so, there is a possibility of Soviet intervention.

Unfortunately I think that there are hawks in NATO who would not be displeased by Soviet intervention because it would then reinforce all their arguments about the need for negotiating constraints. They will ensure that economic sanctions are imposed on the Eastern bloc and frankly I think none of us know where that might end.

I want to pursue this a little because I think there is a certain dangerous ambiguity. From the standpoint of an international peace movement Poland must look very dangerous, but from the standpoint of the Polish workers they are involved in a justified and reasonable struggle. The point is that if the international peace movement does not understand how these two struggles are linked then we could get a situation where people simply turn their backs on such struggles and say 'well never mind the rights or wrongs of them, but the fact that they are going on means a threat to world peace and therefore we are not in favour of them.'

My argument is very simply that the actions of the Polish workers actually takes foward the movement to ban nuclear weapons, because they attack the structures which reproduce that drive for nuclear competition.

As a peace organisation we have felt it necessary to limit ourselves to saying that it is a national struggle, that it concerns the Polish people themselves, that the most important thing from our point of view is that it should not involve the superpowers; that it should not provide the battleground or the excuse for a limited nuclear war in Europe.

I really don't feel that we can say that we, as a disarmament movement, can just support the movement of workers in Poland because we think they fight for good things and I don't think the argument necessarily follows that it is a challenge to the blocs. I haven't heard that they are calling to disassociate themselves from the Warsaw Pact.

They are not. I wanted to use it as an example to show ...

But it is such a tricky example, that is the problem. We are making value judgements which I am really not in a position to do. I think the campaign must be extremely careful not to just say 'we support this organisation or that movement because we know it is right'.

But turning to say the situation in Vietnam, as it was, or in El Salvador as it is today, my argument would be that these struggles by resisting American power played a major role in pushing back the initiatives of the US ruling class and limiting their capacity to operate..

Could I interrupt you there. I disagree with you completely. I think there is no evidence that it has set back the Americans. In fact, quite the contrary, when I was in the States this year I felt that it was very much because of their lost faith in the Vietnam war that many of them are so fanatically anti-Communist. I think that is what has come out of the Vietnam war — 'we're not gonna be defeated again'. So maybe it has set them back in a territorial sense but I don't think it has set back the ideas that they have in military superiority.

Your electoral platform mentioned the importance of the involvement of women at every level in the campaign. What is your reaction to those who call for a separate women's campaign?

I think that there is a place for women's initiatives and women's campaigns particularly at local level. Personally I would be very sad if it was felt that there was a need for a women's movement to be set up nationally devoted to exactly the same aims as CND. I think that would detract from the progress we are making. But at the local level there are many occasions when women can get together to do things as women.

Do you see a role for positive action inside the campaign in favour of the representation of women at every level?

Yes. The positive action that we try to implement at the moment is to draw people's attention to the fact that women are discriminated against in the normal functions of society and that CND is no exception. Many people are not aware of that. So they need to be told what is going on.

We have been doing that in a small way. I have written a letter to each regional secretary saying 'each region has got five representatives, please make sure that you are not discriminating against women' and we have actually hinted that perhaps out of the five, three ought to be women and not two. There is some indication that this has been taken seriously and so the southern region — my own region — has elected five people to the national council and indeed there are three women. My election was also part of that, there is no doubt about it. People wanted me, I think, because I was a woman.

Broadening out the question of involvement in the campaign there has been some controversy and discussion about the fact that at the recent conference and demonstration there was very little representation at the base of the unions. What special measures are required to make the campaign more accessible to this key sector?

The campaign is accessible. It is rather the other way round — to what extent are the unions accessible to us as campaigners, and it is quite difficult to get into the unions at the grassroots if you are not already in it. I have had no difficulty in being invited to speak to local union branches and we have organised showings of 'The War Game' with lots of participation but that is because on a local level I am known to the union movement but for many of our groups there is not that close contact. They

Interviews

do not know who the people are. They find great difficulty in making contact.

It is fair to say that many of the local CND speakers are perhaps a little apprehensive about the kind of reaction they may get if they go along to union branches. So we have to do a lot of planning and preparation. This is something we are now trying to work on and there is a special section of CND called Trade Union CND. They have of necessity had to operate at the top — at the level of going to union conferences, getting resolutions passed, talking to union leaders and winning affiliations. We have done all that very successfully. We have now got to work at getting the grassroots involvement. That is much more important and difficult.

Which social forces must the campaign rest on to be successful? Is it open arms to everybody, or are we trying to prioritise our relationship with certain groups in society?

There is no doubt that we have an open arms policy. Anyone who wishes to join is encouraged to do so. To date most of the campaigning at local level has been aimed at the general public. It has been to go out on the streets, leaflet the public, call meetings and try to appeal to the public on an equal level. As I said I want to see us trying to put the conference resolutions into more specific, practical, form and that will mean saying that we do want to get more union activists involved. Also there is a lot of work we need to do in the schools.

But none of us in the national campaign are in a position to dictate what individual groups should do. Every group must work within its own locality and determine its own priorities. All we can do is say we see great value in trying to implement our conference resolutions.

What about the view that says — of course the campaign should have open arms, but it is the unions which is where, ultimately, we need to seek support because of the future fight we are going to have?

As you know the conference decided that work within the unions was not *the* priority for CND but it was *a* priority and you only have to look at the defeats and setbacks the union movement has had over the last few years to realise that you cannot just expect one part of our society to determine policy for the rest of society. I think the struggles that brought down the Labour government, in the so-called 'winter of discontent', indicated that you cannot just use industrial muscle if you cannot take the people with you.

I think that CND cannot just say we will get the unions to sort this out. CND has to say that trade unionists have an important part to play through being organised in unions, in the workplaces, but that we must be a campaign that is striving for mass public support whether within the union movement, or without, because I do not believe that any part of society will win it by itself.

I want to take up one of the arguments that came up at the conference. At the last CND demonstration there was a huge representation of youth. This was not particularly reflected in the conference delegates. Some people argue, and I agree, that youth must find their own feet within CND and have a self-governing organisation which allows them to determine their own constitution, age limits, etc. This was rejected by conference. Surely that is an example of CND erecting a barrier to a radical force for change?

I agree with the conference decision. I think a lot of the controversy simply centres around the age limit and it seems to me to talk about people in their mid-twenties as youth is very difficult to accept. Most of the local groups which are campaigning throughout the age spectrum need people who are in their mid-twenties. To separate off young adults into a separate campaign seems not to make sense. I would question why this has become such a contentious issue. I think it is perfectly valid for young people to get together as their own campaign but again it is difficult to say why we need such a separate organisation if indeed the aims are identical.

Finally what will be the political effect in a society like Britain of forcing unilateral nuclear disarmament — how would it alter society and people's attitudes?

The effects could be immense. I am sure this is why we are so fiercely opposed. If people were able to overturn government decisions of this kind then they would learn something about democracy and about the power they have as people. It would question the whole position of government — particularly in terms of secrecy and power being imposed on the people. So if we were to win this campaign, for the first time in their lives, very large numbers of people would have been taught political lessons. And once they have learned those lessons there is no telling what they might demand for the future in terms of society and the political system.

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EL SALVADOR – REPRE

Megan Martin

El Salvador: Repression & Revolution is a photographic exhibition researched and prepared by Camerawork and the El Salvador Solidarity Campaign.

Eighteen photographers have donated their work to the exhibition. The result is a massive presentation of nearly 100 colour, black and white and photomontaged images, together with testimonies, letters and interviews with Salvadoreans.

In the first panel John Pilger explains their purpose:

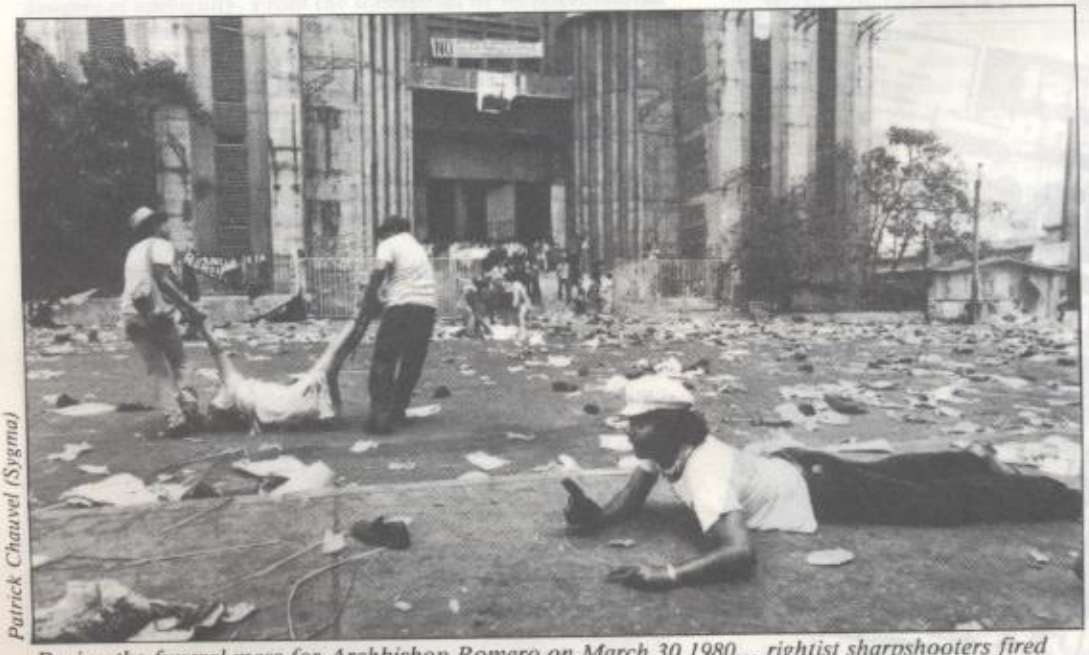
'The photographs in this exhibition tell a simple truth about a Central American country, no bigger than Wales, which deserves the attention of all Europeans not yet lost to the conditioning of an economic cartel. The country is El Salvador and the truth is this: a people who in recent years have begun to break free from the prison of feudalism, to aspire to live decently and to see their children live without malnutrition and disease, are being murdered systematically, by their 'government'; and the murderers are being re-armed and sustained by the United States with more than a little help from Britain.'

The story is told by arranging the photographs and text into panels, and grouping these panels into 11 areas: socio-economic background; history; lives of women; repression; the Junta; FDR: unity of the people; Farabundi Marti National Liberation Front; children; the media; American intervention; the church. In each area the photographs are supplemented by short pieces of text, mostly statements from Salvadoreans.

Some sections are rich in photographs some sections rely more on text. This, together with the division of the exhibition into 11 areas, indicates something important: it is an exhibition that tries, sometimes almost painfully, to be *honest*. It doesn't opt for easy solutions such as a 'focus' on one particular area. There is no special emphasis given, for example, to images of atrocity, although there might have been since the organisers were offered many of these. (Of course there are some because atrocities are part of daily reality in El

Christian Poveda (Visions)

"We don't want to live in these conditions anymore so we are going to fight until we win."



Patrick Chauvel (Sygma)

During the funeral mass for Archbishop Romero on March 30 1980... rightist sharpshooters fired on the crowd of one-hundred thousand in the Cathedral Square.

A comandante supervises her liberated zones women are in hospitals and weapons' prod alongside the men and are in forming 40% of the Revoluti

"We are going
are at least five
we are very bra
you are going
theirs."

— from a letter to the childr Salvador

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ION OR REVOLUTION

Salvador.)

The organisers have tried to give the photographs a context that provides a real account of the struggle in El Salvador. They are conscious that the media has been involved in a massive campaign of disinformation regarding El Salvador, which includes both outright lies and the more subtle business of making the truth look false. In one of the *Media* panels Jon Snow from ITN says:

'Mass opinion in the US is influenced very heavily by the television networks, ABC, NBC and CBS. When, finally, the networks had to get involved in reporting El Salvador, they chose to send their State Department correspondents who had been reporting verbatim the statements made by Alexander Haig and others formulating US policy on El Salvador. ABC for instance sent their man who had been in the State Department for 20 years. He arrived on the tarmac in a chartered plane and did what we call a "piece to camera" and got back into the plane with the film.'

Tim Buckley in the *New Yorker* June 1981 says, also in this section:

'One lesson has been learned from the Vietnam war at any rate, and that is to make it as difficult as possible for the journalists to see what's going on.'

This exhibition tells us what is going on with a confidence and directness that comes from an understanding of the reality of El Salvador: you must either line up with the repression, with a regime that has murdered and mutilated more than 25,000 of its citizens in the last two years or you must follow the mass of the population on the revolutionary path. There is no middle ground in El Salvador.

Militants should try to hire this exhibition to show in their area — its educative and politicising value is considerable.

The exhibition is a Camerawork touring exhibition and is available for hire. For details phone 01-980 6256.

Christian Poveda (Visions)

they clean their weapons... in the of civil engineering, campaign 'n the guerilla armies women fight ted into the command structure, Council of the FPL for instance.

Christian Poveda (Visions)

Guerilla training camp... after a three-week training session the FMLN fighters held a party.

win because there llion of us and We hope that end us tanks like

e world from the children of El

Susan Meiselas (Magnum)

US 'military advisor' outside the American Embassy in San Salvador.

International Features

THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONNECTION

JOHN BLAIR

Britain's decline from world pre-eminence has had its effects on its traditional dominance in trade and investment in South Africa. But, argues John Blair, this does not mean that Britain does not still play a major part in propping up the apartheid regime.

Historically Britain was the most important imperial power in the entire southern African region. It became effectively dominant in 1806 with the takeover of the strategically-located Cape colony from the Dutch East India Company. Natal was acquired from Boer colonists in 1842. When the vast mineral wealth of the region was uncovered later in the nineteenth century, British companies and individuals were in the forefront of its exploration. Estimates suggest that at least 75 per cent of the capital involved in opening up the diamond and gold deposits originated in the UK.

The 2nd Boer War (1899-1902) was fought successfully with the aim of securing British control of the gold-rich Witwatesrand. Meantime present-day Zimbabwe had been colonised in 1893 by Cecil Rhodes' British South Africa Company and the rulers of the three modern states of Swaziland, Lesotho and Botswana coerced into accepting British 'protectorate' status. At the beginning of the twentieth century Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Nyasaland (Malawi) were swiftly conquered. In 1910 the all-white government of the Union of South Africa, formed of the Cape, Natal, Orange Free State and Transvaal, was granted 'dominion', ie. in all essentials self-governing, status within the British empire. Finally the Versailles Peace Congress of 1919 handed mandatory control over German South West Africa (Namibia) to South Africa.

The adjoining territories of Angola and Mozambique meanwhile were under the control of Britain's 'oldest ally' Portugal: a state whose own economy was largely controlled by Britain.

The exploitation of the region's vast mineral wealth depended in the first place on the importation of large amounts of capital from Britain. In addition the late 19th and early 20th centuries saw the emigration of tens of thousands of British workers. The first of these were speculators, staking their claims on the diamond and later gold fields. But as these rapidly came to be controlled by a series of powerful mining houses, the prospectors gave way to skilled workers. Bringing with them a tradition of trade union organisation, such workers frequently featured in the leadership of militant struggles in South Africa. Typical was the engineer, Bill Andrews, later chairman of the Communist Party of South Africa who was a leader of the white miners' strike of 1922 during which more than 60 were killed by government forces.

The 1922 strike in many ways prefigured the whole subsequent evolution of white labour in South Africa. It was called to protest a reduction in the proportion of white to black labour in the mines. Its racist evolution was succinctly summarised in a prominently displayed banner which read 'Workers of the World Unite for a White South Africa'. From 1922 onwards white labour, increasingly including newly-proletarianised Afrikaaners (descendants of the earlier Dutch settlers) and new waves of immigrants from Eastern Europe, stood in perennial alliance with its exploiters' governments and provided one of the most durable examples in the world of the phenomenon of labour aristocracy.

The changing place of British capital

In financing and organising the development of mines, railways, modern farming and manufacture, British capital played a central role in the development of the modern South African economy; at the time of the Second World War more than half of the country's trade was still done directly with Britain. Since then however Britain's economic importance has been progressively and substantially reduced. Two factors have been critical here.

The first was growth of a specifically South African state capitalism. Since the foundation of the Iron and Steel Corporation (ISCOR) in 1928 and the Electricity Supply Corporation (ESCOM) in 1932, the state has been a key agent of capital accumulation. At first political power rested on an alliance of white workers and mainly British-controlled capital. But the numerical preponderance of Afrikaaners among the enfranchised whites and the use of the state to facilitate the emergence of local capitalists from their number provided the basis for the emergence of the Nationalists in 1948 as the single controlling white party. Since then the process of building up domestic in relation to foreign capital has continued apace leading to the emergence of giant companies like those of the Rupert tobacco empire and the Federale Mynbou in mining.

The second factor has been the relative weakening of British imperialism internationally. Britain's position as leading trader with and investor in South Africa has been challenged as a result of its own continuing demotion in the international league table of imperialist nations. The extent of change varies considerably, however, from sector to sector.

Broadly speaking it is trade that has been most dramatically affected; here Britain has clearly lost its prime position. The balance of investment is also changing in favour of other capitalist countries but Britain still retains a pre-eminent position in the breadth and extent of its implantation while the challenge to its dominance in the area of banking capital is even slower to develop.

Imports from UK as % of South African imports by value

1957	1964	1968	1970	1973	1976	1977	1980
32.6	28.7	23.9	22.2	19.0	17.5	16.4	12.1

From being the supplier of nearly one third of South Africa's imports at the beginning of the sixties, the UK is now reduced to a one-eighth share. In 1980 it was behind the USA and West Germany and not far ahead of Japan, with France also coming up behind. In the early sixties more than 4 per cent of Britain's exports went to South Africa. The figure now is 2.02per cent. Such figures are a firm indication that an area that had once lay firmly in the British imperial orbit is now slipping from its grasp.

Movement in investment patterns is much more difficult to assess: it is however almost certainly much slower to change. It is in the manufacturing sector that foreign holdings are most apparent with practically every prominent multi-national represented. Further scrutiny however reveals that in many cases the products of these big companies are being manufactured under local licence. An examination of the top 100 South African industrial companies shows foreign shareholdings in 49. Of these 36 are British and they include 13 in which a majority shareholding is held in the UK. (see Table 2)

These bare statistics clearly establish the key historical role of British capital in South Africa. But they tend to underestimate the importance of many minority shareholdings

International Features

Table 2: Registered Direct Holdings by British companies or individuals in top 100 South African Industrials 1977

Rank in top 100	Name	Holding %	Registered Foreign Holder
1	Lonrho	53	Lonrho UK & Mr Tiny Rowland
2	South African Breweries	13.6	London share register
5	Barlow Rand	5.0	London share register
7	African Explosives and Chemical Industries	49.5	Imperial Chemical Industries UK (ICI)
8	Huletts	3.5	London share register
10	Safmarine	36.0	British and Commonwealth Shipping UK
11	OK Bazaars	4.1	London share register
12	Premier Milling	52.3	Associated British Foods UK
14	Tiger Oats	4.7	London share register
15	Dorman Long Venderbijl	19.8	British Steel UK (indirect holding)
19	Tongaat	0.6	M.G. Maskell, London
21	Sentrachem	16.2	British Petroleum Chemicals (indirect)
24	Blue Circle	76.5	Associated Portland Cement UK
26	Pretoria Portland Cement	8.2	London share register
28	Steward and Lloyds	22.9	British Steel UK (direct)
		17.9	British Steel UK (indirect)
36	African Oxygen	58.3	British Oxygen UK
40	Metal Box	60.3	Metal Box UK
41	Federale Kunsmis	1.8	Commonwealth Development Finance UK
45	Swazi Sugar	99.9	Anglo Ceylon & General Estate UK (Lonhro)
46	Reed Nampak	51.8	Reed International UK
49	Mitchell Cotts	80.0	Mitchell Cotts UK
51	Union Steel	0.6	Donald Forrester London
52	Abercom	11.0	London share register
60	Hubert Davies	48.7	Associated Portland Cement UK
		6.6	Standard and Chase nominees Channel Islands
65	Utico	72.7	British American Tobacco Industries UK
66	Woolworths	3.7	London share register
67	Dunlop	70.0	Dunlop International UK
77	Primrose Industrial	12.2	London share register
79	Frasers	50.0	Fraser family, UK
91	Tollgate Holdings	2.7	Pearl Assurance Company UK
93	African Cable	58.0	Combine of cable manufacturers UK
95	Marshall Industrials	1.5	Pearl Insurance Company UK
96	Adcock Chemists	1.9	Mrs H. Duchen, London UK
100	Cadbury Schweppes	66.0	Cadbury Schweppes UK

and ignore the other means by which foreign multinationals gain infuence in and profit from cheap black labour in South Africa.

On the first point it is important to examine more closely the role of many companies that hold only minority shareholdings. The seventh largest industrial company in South Africa is African Explosives and Chemical Industries (AECI) in which the British Imperial Chemical Industries has a 49.5 per cent holding. Even a cursory glance at its local products reveal that AECI has access to the full range of research and development undertaken by its parent without which its sophisticated products for mining and the military would be at the very least considerably more expensive and difficult to manufacture. Similar considerations must certainly surround the holdings of the nationalised British Steel Corporation (BSC) in Dorman Longs and Stewart and Lloyds (15th and 28th respectively).

Such minority shareholding is now a common feature of the operations of multinational companies world wide. In the South African case it particularly enables firms like BSC whose public ownership does give an element of accountability, to disclaim responsibility for the practices of their local associates.

For South Africa, transfer of technology of the kind described above is now the most important feature of its links with the multinationals. Calculations made by one author showed for instance that between 1967 and 1971 nominal UK investment increased by 398.9 million Rand. But of this 323.9m Rand or 81 per cent was accounted for by unremitted profits. Some 17 per cent came from the reinvestment of debts incurred to parent companies so that the net new acquisition of shares and loan capital represented only 2 per cent of this increase.(1) Thus at the industrial level it is now technology and not money that is the most important input from outside.

In this respect it is above all in the production of military and military-related equipment that British firms continue to provide an essential lifeline. For example riot control gas is manufactured by AECI, communications equipment by Plessey and GEC Marconi, computers by ICL, Land Rovers by British Leyland, warships are designed by Yarrow African Maritime Consultancy.

Banking

The other area in which British imperialism, despite its decreased overall importance as trader and investor, continues to provide essential backing for the apartheid regime is the provision of finance capital. Far and away the largest two banks in South Africa are the British-owned Barclays and Standard. For the former 1 in 5 of its branches are located in the Republic and £53 million gross or nearly one fifth of group profit was made there in 1980. Between them, they control more than one half of total banking deposits.

More crucial to the survival of the South African economy as presently structured and developing is the provision of loans to government and government-sponsored enterprises. Vast sums are currently sought at home and abroad to help reshape the economy to be able to withstand possible international sanctions by reducing dependence on imported goods and technology and to maintain its present growth rate. Over the nine years 1972-80 South Africa borrowed a total of nearly 7 billion US dollars from overseas banks via 186 separate loans. Of this,large parts were managed from London by merchant banks like Hill Samuel and Hambros or by Barclays. A typical example was the 250 million dollar loan organised by Barclays in 1980 in collaboration with the American banking group, Citicorp, Dresdner Bank, and Union Bank of Switzerland. A very specific project for which Barclays and others have been centrally involved in overseas fund raising is the South African Oil Fund. This hopes to offset the effects of the dependence on foreign oil that is often described as South Africa's achilles heel. Despite persistent searches over many years no significant deposits have been found in an area that is rich in virtually every other known mineral. The government is making accelerated efforts via the SASOL oil from coal project and the storing of massive quantities — now up to two years' supply — in disused mine workings, to insure against the worst.

That there is currently no shortage of oil in South Africa is due crucially to two British companies, Shell and BP, who currently deliver more than one-third of its supplies. The experience of Zimbabwe where both these successfully avoided internationally agreed trade sanctions for fourteen years shows that South Africa will be well placed to resist the effects of any possible future embargo and that British companies would be in the forefront of their subversion.

International Features

British involvement in South Africa — Namibian uranium

One of the best exposed of Britain's links with South Africa concerns the exploitation of the uranium of the Rossing mine in Namibia by a consortium that includes the Rio Tinto Zinc Corporation. (Lord Carrington, currently British Foreign Secretary has a big holding in RTZ and was on the board of directors until his appointment to government office in 1979). This provides another typical example of the utilisation by South Africa of the technical and marketing resources of a foreign company while themselves maintaining ultimate control over the product. RTZ has only a minority shareholding in the Rossing Uranium Company. A majority of voting rights are held by the South African Industrial Development Corporation and the big mining house Federale Mynbou. The mine falls under the provisions of the South African Atomic Energy Act. This makes the export of uranium subject to official permission. A major part of Rossing's development costs have been borne by the government. Its importance will be to provide the regime with new sources of uranium for energy and weaponry.

RTZ don't do badly out of the deal either. In 1980 the Rossing mine contributed £21 million out of the record £155 million profit. In 1979 the mine had produced £12.6m. The British government has been involved in the Rossing development since its inception. In 1967 the then Labour government accepted a contract that guaranteed the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority delivery of 7,500 tons of uranium oxide between 1976 and 1982. In 1973 Tony Benn wrote a letter to the *Guardian* newspaper expressing the view that a future Labour government should cancel the contract as part of their response to South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia. As Minister of Energy in the 1974 Labour government Benn did however accept the continuation of the deal.

Within the Labour Party the question was raised time and again by the executive and at conference. Typical of the leadership response was that of David Ennals, then Minister of State at the Foreign Office in reply to a letter from Alex Kitson of the Transport and General Workers' Union in 1975:

'If Namibia achieves independence in the near future ... then the economic value of the Rossing mine and of the Atomic Energy Authority — Rio Tinto Zinc will be of enormous importance to the new nation. Given the possibility of rapid constitutional change in Namibia, it is our view that on balance the AEA-RTZ contract is in the interests of both Namibia and of Britain.'

Six years later after constant South African prevarication encouraged by the manoeuvres of the 'western contact group' nothing has changed for Namibia. Meantime Britain (or at least British Nuclear Fuels and RTZ) has certainly benefited and the other main recipient of the riches of Namibia has been South Africa. That Ennals' view was not shared by SWAPO was made clear in its categorical reply in 1976 that demanded the immediate termination of the contract and emphasised that foreign companies such as RTZ were taking advantage of the immediate political situation to make 'a criminal exploitation of irreplaceable natural resources which rightly belong to the people of Namibia'.

Practical activity to frustrate the implementation of the Rossing uranium contract has been constantly sought by various groups in Britain. These have been led by the Preston Trades Council (BNF's processing plant to which the uranium is delivered is near Preston) and the Anti Apartheid Coordinating Committee of the North West Trades Union Congress. A specific Campaign Against the Namibian Uranium Contract (CANUC) exists to co-ordinate research and publicity on the theme.

Unfortunately RTZ and BNF have so far collaborated successfully to smuggle in the products of Rossing. These are transported by air to France and then by truck across the Channel. Despite numerous efforts no progress has been made in attempts to stop this trade. Chiefly culpable here is Alex Kitson's Transport and General Workers' Union who organise British dockers and truck drivers. The battle to stop the Namibian contract and to ensure a clear Labour Party commitment to its abolition remains a central priority of Anti-Apartheid activists in Britain.

Rowntrees and union busting

Rowntree Mackintosh are Britain's biggest manufacturers of confectionery and biscuits. They have subsidiaries around the world. Their South African plant, Wilson Rowntree in East London, employs up to two thousand people and has recently been brought into 100 per cent ownership by the parent group.

Since 1940 Rowntree SA recognised the Sweet Workers' Union as representative of its workforce. This was led by whites, representative only of the non-African minority of workers and ultra-conservative. Management claimed earlier this year that in the entire 40 years of its existence as the only workers' organisation in the plant there had been not a single dispute!

In the middle of last year a new union became active in the area: the South African Allied Workers' Union (SAAWU). It began to organise in the plant and rapidly gained a majority of the Africans who in turn make up the overwhelming majority of the workforce. In October it received begrudging recognition from management. Over the next six months at least 30 stoppages took place around a variety of issues and in March this year management determined to act decisively against the SAAWU. Three workers were dismissed for refusing to make repairs to a machine which they were operating. Six months previously they had all received official warnings for doing precisely that when it had broken down. They therefore insisted on waiting for skilled engineers to do the job. Their dismissal was challenged by protest walk-outs by wide sections of the workforce. Management responded by decreeing instant dismissal. In the end more than 800 workers were sacked.

The unemployment rate of more than 20 per cent in and around East London made it relatively easy for Rowntrees to recruit scab labour to replace the sacked workers. Workers were invited to apply for reinstatement as individuals but management weeding out of 'troublemakers' ensured that a net total of 498 were effectively dismissed. Rowntrees suffered considerable disruption of production in the short term because of the need to retrain a completely new work force for many sections. This disruption was however less than that caused and continuing to be caused to their sales in South Africa. Utilising the slogan 'Spit out that gum, Chum!' and widespread leafletting and postering via community organisations in the black areas, the SAAWU and its supporters are running a consumer boycott which aims at the same success as was achieved by the same means last year by the strikers at the Fattis and Monis meat processing plant in the Cape.

In this case the solidarity of British unions has been unfortunately very weak. The General and Municipal Workers' Union (GMWU) which has a relatively right wing leadership, organises the majority of production workers in Rowntrees' main British plant in York. It has sent messages of support from its national office to the SAAWU but has done absolutely nothing to propagandise among its members locally about the significance of this struggle for them. Meantime management has responded to campaigning initiated by the local Anti-Apartheid group with the backing of the Trades Council and Labour Party by peddling the lie in the factory and local press that the SAAWU has organised intimidation and violence against scabs.

Campaigning in Rowntrees in support of their South African workers is considerably more difficult than it is where close links exist as with the Namibian uranium that arrives in Britain from Rossing. Effective action would involve a comprehensive embargo on all contact with the South African plant — in particular of a financial and technical kind. To do this the cooperation of all unions would be essential and it is potentially important that the one local branch to have discussed and passed a clear motion on this question is the Technical and Super-

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South African military terrorises Namibian people

visory Staffs (TASS). But it is not possible to envisage success for such an operation until the mass of workers in Rowntrees here are won to a *political understanding* of the need for such solidarity. Continued inaction by the leadership of the main union in the York plant will make this a much more difficult task.

British Leyland backs apartheid

British Leyland is a state-owned car and truck company that has its biggest overseas operation in South Africa. Although this operation, like its British counterpart, has suffered a precipitous decline in the immediate past (only 1.6 per cent of the car market compared to more than five per cent five years ago) the company is currently engaged in consolidating its presence there. This involves selling its Blackheath commercial vehicle plant to the Anglo-American group for £8.5 million and transferring all production to an expanded plant at Elsies River. There the workforce will be doubled to 4,000 with planned production of 45,000 vehicles per annum.

BL has a long history of dispute with the new wave of independent black trades unions. The Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU) began recruitment in 1973 at its Mobeni plant. A strike demanding recognition in 1974 was smashed by sacking all the participants and re-employing them individually and selectively to eliminate 'trouble-makers'. From these earliest days BL also consistently used the state Security Branch to deal with union organisers, arresting and threatening them, confiscating literature etc. In 1976 three MAWU organisers were served with five year banning orders.

The nationalisation of BL by the British Labour government in 1976 — a measure taken to stave off its collapse — made no difference to its South African operations. The latest example of Leyland SA's long established management style came in May this year when all 1900 workers at Elsies River struck over a pay dispute. Once again all were sacked and selective re-recruitment undertaken. The opportunity was taken to increase the percentage of women workers from 10 per cent to 30 per cent. This was not however an act of positive discrimination since management claimed it would ensure greater stability of the labour force in the future.

Unions in British Leyland in Britain have been a good deal more active than those in Rowntrees in trying to build support for their African fellow workers. In 1977 there was at least one half day of token action in the Coventry Rover plant in their support. Unfortunately activity has tended to fall short during the past few years while the British company has been shedding nearly one third of its own labour force. It is precisely at times such as this that the need to ensure unfettered activity of free trade unions in all sections of such a multinational can in fact most easily be understood by workers threatened by redundancy and closures that are often accompanied by the transfer of work to cheap labour and unorganised plant.

Britain and the 'Code of Conduct'

The starvation wages paid to black workers in South Africa were the subject of a good deal of press publicity in Britain in the early 1970s. That this happened was no accident: it coincided with the new upsurge of black working class activity in South Africa from 1973 onwards. The upshot was the production in 1974 of a government ('White Paper') laying out a proposed 'Code of Practice' for British firms in South Africa. The main emphasis was on the increase of wages to levels of 50 per cent above the official Poverty Datum Line and firms were 'invited' to make reports to government about the extent to

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which their subsidiaries had implemented such principles. The increased presence of other European companies in South Africa was reflected in the production in 1977 of an EC (European Community) Code of Conduct that was essentially a revised version of the British one. What lies behind the 'Code of Conduct' approach was honestly expressed by a German academic at a recent conference which discussed the experience of the EC code:

'We should like to know which inputs can induce this machinery to produce some degree of change other than spectacular violence or oil boycotts or the like.'

In other words, the profitability of our investments in South Africa is threatened. Change is badly needed to ensure its maintenance. The code of conduct will help to ensure this happens with the minimum of disruption and offers the best chance of maintaining profitable exploitation of black labour.

In fact the formulae of the various codes of conduct are stuck to just so long as they suit employers. Those who don't comply certainly receive protection from the British government. A recent report in the *Observer* gave details of a confidential report prepared by a former British Labour attache in Pretoria. It named 21 British companies paying African workers below the PDL (ie. 50 per cent below the agreed 'Code of Conduct' level). This was 3 more than in the last published report of 1979. This time however the information was not to appear in the published report. According to the Trade Secretary in the Tory government, John Biffen, publication 'would not be productive'.

Socialists should be clear about the cosmetic function of 'codes of conduct'. Their very existence can be a source of valuable information. They cannot however be relied on to produce any results of the kind demanded by South African labour. Our demands must be that the trades union movement, working wherever possible in co-ordination with its brothers and sisters in South Africa, produce its own series of demands on management for the defence and spectacular betterment of black workers' living standards and conditions. In particular that it fight for defence of the basic democratic right to organise in the South African plants.

Nor should such demands be seen as contradictory to our long time attempts to isolate the apartheid regime through a policy of overall opposition to any investment in or trade with South Africa. Propaganda in support of the struggles of black workers against British firms there, especially when it is angled towards employees of the same firms here, can be one of the most striking and effective ways through which to win long term support for the policy of an overall boycott.

Britain and South Africa: the diplomatic game

Just as the economic importance of Great Britain has undergone considerable change as her capitalist competitors catch up with her at the level of trade and increasingly investment, so Britain's position as the sole maker and executor of Western policy for this region has come under increasing pressure. At one time United Nations ritual resolutions against apartheid and calls for boycott action were opposed and vetoed by Britain alone. On the last such occasion two months ago the United States stood as the sole opponent of a resolution on Namibia while Britain and France felt able to abstain.

The increased co-ordination of Western policy in southern Africa is reflected in the existence of the so-called 'contact group' of five — Britain, Canada, USA, France and Germany — charged with seeking a 'settlement' of the Namibian question. This development in turn reflects the increased collective anxiety of the nations of the Western alliance about the prospects of revolutionary upheaval in southern Africa. They know that every day that South Africa is ruled by the white racists lessens the possibility of preventing their overthrow by a mass revolutionary struggle of the black oppressed. They know too that this struggle will be led by a black working class that grows incessantly larger and stronger and that the overthrow of the apartheid regime will pose the question of a transition to socialism in this mineral rich region as an immediate and living question. What remains certain however is that, whatever the increased co-ordination by the West, at the end of the day the British government is most likely to be the final executor of any deals that are cooked up. Similarly it appears certain that a British government minister will have responsibility for yet more attempts to clinch a 'peaceful transition to majority rule' in Namibia and that it will be British diplomats, academics etc. who will be charged with the ten times more difficult task of persuading the Nationalist regime in Pretoria to come clean on its promises of change.

Such a 'historic role' for British imperialism places an equally gigantic task on the shoulders of the British working class movement which must become the best defenders of the coming South African revolution.

Approximate breakdown of foreign companies having investments in South Africa (from *Apartheid and Business* 1980)

Britain	**1,200**
West Germany	**350**
USA	**340**
France	**50**
Japan	**50**
Netherlands	**50**
Australia	**35**
Belgium	**20**
Italy	**20**
Switzerland	**12**
Sweden	**10**
Spain	**6**
Canada	**5**

(1) John Suckling: Study Paper No 5 in *Project on External Investment in South Africa and Namibia*, Africa Publications Trust, Uppsala, 1975.

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THE BRITISH CRISIS

JOHN ROSS

Andrew Gamble: *Britain in Decline*, Papermac, 1981, £4.95

The appearance of Andrew Gamble's book *Britain in Decline* is welcome from a number of points of view. It provides a summary of a vast amount of material concerned with the political analysis of British society, the history of its capitalism, and the perspectives which flow from it. As a source of data on Britain's economic decline and other related questions it is extremely useful.

The second key strength, a refreshing contrast to many contributions and allowing problems to be posed in a realistic way, is that it stresses throughout that the crisis of British capitalism can only be understood in terms of *international* development: in the fact that Britain was the first great capitalist power and the first developed economy and society. Within that context the discussion of such issues as the dominance of banking capital over industry, the defeat of the 'social imperialist' strategy of Joseph Chamberlain and others to revive British industry, the question of why the British ruling class fought German imperialism in two world wars but capitulated without struggle before the United States, are given their due central importance.

Thirdly the book correctly insists on the peculiarly 'unfinished' character of the bourgeois revolution in Britain in the political sphere. That is, to put it in slightly more precise terms than Gamble uses, that despite the fact that the British bourgeoisie achieved an overwhelming development of the capitalist economy it failed from the mid-19th century onwards to bring about the necessary changes in the political structures and class relation of forces, both inside the ruling class and between the ruling class and the working class, that could have maintained this development. Hence from the mid-19th century onwards commenced the long history of relative decline of British capitalism which is so familiar.

All the points are correct and important, although not all are original to Gamble, and pondering on their significance will go far towards orienting revolutionaries correctly in the dimensions of the present political crisis in Britain. They mark the book out as one of the most useful recent contributions to an analysis of British society and well worth reading.

Finally the book is significant because unlike many others on the subject it does not treat the British ruling class as homogeneous but understands that it has differences of interest within it. Given the tradition within Marxism in Britain, as opposed to that of the 'classical Marxism' of Marx to Trotsky, not to analyse the British ruling class at all this is a welcome emphasis. The type of quasi-mystical rhetoric engaged in by the British left concerning 'the class' (by which is meant the working class) is in direct contrast to Lenin's point that: 'Tactics must be based on a sober and strictly objective appraisal of *all* the class forces in a particular state (and of the states that surround it, and of all states the world

Photo: GM COOKSON

'I see no u-turns'

over)', and that, 'science...demands that account be taken of *all* forces, groups, parties, classes and masses operating in a given country.' Re-establishing serious debate concerning not only the British working class but also the British *ruling* class is a very necessary step forward for Marxism in Britain. Gamble's and other contributions should therefore help considerably raise the theoretical level of discussion.

Despite these important strengths, however, the book suffers from some major flaws which considerably reduce the force of its arguments. These almost all arise because at various points Gamble succumbs to the temptation to substitute various sorts of eclectic categories for Marxist ones.

The British state

The first major problem in Gamble's argument concerns the reasons why it was Britain which became the world's first imperialist power. Given that it was its initial success which, as Gamble himself correctly stresses, which laid the basis and set the terms of later decline, this is clearly a fundamental question. Unfortunately, rather than providing an answer in terms of social relations, Gamble lays too much emphasis on geography: the fact that Britain is an island and, therefore, allegedly a secure base of operations. This, however, is not by any means the most fundamental point as becomes obvious when two historical facts are taken into account.

First, prior to the Norman invasion of 1066, England, far from being strong, constituted a sort of large forested swamp which successive waves of Romans, Scots, Picts, Saxons, Vikings, and Normans had no trouble in conquering or invading with far more primitive levels of technology than existed later. Furthermore it is evidently equally technically difficult to cross the Channel one way as the other and therefore geographic causes cannot possibly explain why from the 'Middle Ages' onwards it was always the English who periodically invaded France and continental Europe and not the other way round.

Secondly, the world's first bourgeois revolution occurred in Holland. Despite its position on the mainland of Europe, the greatest military power of the day, Spain, proved incapable of crushing Holland militarily. The extraordinary strength and resistance of Holland was due precisely to its social relations — the fact that it was a capitalist power. The Dutch were finally defeated, and their ambitions as a world power thwarted, only by a superior *bourgeois* force — the English state after the capitalist revolution culminating in 1649.

What was it, then, about Britain's social relations which allowed this superiority to develop? From 1066 onwards England possessed, in relative terms, an extremely centralised and powerful feudal society of a unified character — with a relative absence of problems of internal customs barriers and decentralised political power which hindered capitalism elsewhere. This, coupled with the trade in wool to the developing capitalism of the Low Countries, aided monetarisation of the economy and an extremely early dissolution of feudal landed property relations. The creation of capitalist property in land, which meant that the civil war of 1642-49 was fought out between two groups of landowners *both* of which were essentially already based on capitalist property, was the core of the whole

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future development of British society.

It explains the apparently confused and opaque character of the civil war itself, which related far more to the political role of the monarchic state and its *attempt* to create a 'feudal absolutism' than to any antagonism based on different modes of production. It also accounts for the otherwise inexplicable and anomalous fact that well into the 19th century no group in British society, including the industrialists, could compete in wealth and power with the landed aristocracy. It is a curious but decisive historical fact that the first great industrial power in the world was built, and for almost its entire history politically dominated, by a *landed*, and not industrial, capitalist class.

The development of this landed capitalist class into domination of the Conservative Party, and its long interrelation with banking capital in the City of London *against* industrial capital, explains much of the subsequent post-mid 19th century history of British capitalism. The apparently irrational and 'stupid' economic policies pursued by the bourgeoisie, up to and including the present Thatcher government, are not explainable outside this context. These policies were, in fact, an expression of the inability of domestic industrial capital economically, and above all politically, to dominate the country — a failure which culminated with the collapse of the Liberal Party in 1916 amid the strains of the First World War.

While there are, to say the least, a number of intervening events between these and the current crisis of British capitalism, the errors in Gamble's historical analysis lead to considerable problems when he turns to look at contemporary political problems and the means to tackle them; indeed it is the section on current strategy which is the weakest of his book.

The present political crisis in Britain is the product of an enormous accumulation of historical contradictions: no other state in the world has such an unbroken continuity as the English/British. To understand what is happening in British politics today it is impossible without grasping that the Tory Party, and above all its Thatcherite wing, does *not* represent the decisive forces of the British domestic industrial bourgeoisie who, on the contrary, are represented by Heath, The Liberals and the SDP.

The political implications and consequences are also clear. The present Heathite wing inside the Tory Party is generally referred to as 'wet' — as though it were somehow more restrained and less anti-working class in its policies than Thatcher. Foot, Kinnock and Co call on it to oppose the'unreasonableness' of Thatcher.

Such a view is radically false. The Heath wing inside the Tory Party simply reflects the fact that the peculiar historical formation of the Tory Party means that the relation of forces within it is significantly different to that inside the ruling class as a whole. In fact Thatcher's policies are, in the present relation of forces, *against* the interests of the most decisive sections of the bourgeoisie. The opposition of Heath to Thatcher within the Tory Party is simply based on an attempt to shift the relation of forces inside the ruling class in favour of an alternative which is economically more rational for the bourgeoisie. Its policies, based on a massive increase of the rate of profit through incomes policy and cuts in real wages, are just as completely against the interests of the working class as Thatcher. Far from being 'wet' it in fact represents decisive and dangerous sectors of the ruling class.

The SDP-Liberal Alliance fits in the same framework. Its economic policy is identical to that of Heath. The SDP however simply represents another political strategy — one performing a twin role with Heath. The more sane elements of the ruling class are well aware that the British working class will never be won to support of the Conservative Party — for a hundred and forty years 'the Tories' have represented for the mass working class movement *the* enemy. Hatred of the Tory Party is far deeper in the working class than either positive support for the Labour Party or any commitment to socialism. While the Heath wing of the Tory Party may be economically correct for the ruling class, *politically* it has no hope of confronting the working class as the experience of the Heath government of 1970-74 conclusively demonstrated.

The role of the SDP is precisely to fill the gap between the massive working class distrust and hate of the Tory Party and the much smaller section which actually positively supports Labour. By splitting the Labour Party vote, reducing it to a party with no perspective of forming a government, the SDP has the project of *politically* breaking up the traditional historical perspectives of the working class and opening the door for 'Heathite' economic policies to be presented as the 'only practical alternative to Thatcherism'.

Seen from the point of view of the objective relation of forces this policy is in fact hopelessly doomed. The idea, which in reality is the content of the theorisations of 'sophisticated' Eurocommunist wings of the Communist Party and not a few on the Labour left, that it is possible to have some sort of 'Popular Front' to relaunch British capitalism is absurd. The rejuvenation of domestic capitalist industry was already impossible by the middle of the nineteenth century and has zero chance of success today.

The danger of the situation however lies precisely in the orientation of the Labour bureaucracy. The de facto line of Foot, Kinnock, Healey and the union leadership of 'uniting everyone against Thatcher' is in fact one of total disaster. It is precisely aiming for an alliance *with* the key sections of the ruling class — not any policy of struggle against capitalism. Its realisation, in a Labour-SDP government following the introduction of proportional representation which is its logical embodiment, is in fact the only coherence of the present orientation of Foot. This would be the greatest disaster to strike the labour movement since 1931. Clarifying the real nature and social bases of the various political forces in Britain is vital in clarifying political strategy and this involves an understanding of their history. Gamble's theoretical eclecticism prevents the full strategic implications being drawn out of the material he himself assembles.

Alternative economic strategy

It would be possible to give many further examples from *Britain in Decline* of failure to formulate theoretical problems clearly and therefore to draw clear political conclusions from them. At one point, for example, Gamble puts forward the curious idea that it might have been an historical strategy for the ruling class to aim for 'the creation of a new order in which all individual workers could participate as full members — free sellers of labour power, sovereign consumers, and potential capitalists — (which) could have provided the basis for an attempt to abolish the working class as a class, offering the opportunity to rise as compensation for the inequalities of the market' (p.82). This strategy was apparently rejected by the ruling class.

It is difficult to know what is meant by a passage such as this. One assumes Gamble does not mean that it is literally possible for the bourgeoisie to achieve the 'abolition of the working class as a class' — a capitalism without a proletariat would indeed have been one of the most curious 'strategies' existing in history! Presumably it indicates that the ruling class might have adopted some sort of strategy of political hegemony based on presenting Britain as a radically democratic type of society (on the model later adopted by the American ruling class). In reality however such a perspective was totally excluded. As Mike Davis has correctly pointed out in a major article in *New Left Review* (issue 123), political forms of domination used by the US ruling class were based on the existence of a very large layer of small capitalist farmers who had an interest in democracy but also very clearly in keeping it within bourgeois limits. In Britain, however, by the middle of the nineteenth century, or even earlier, neither small farmers nor even a classic petit-bourgeoisie existed as a force of any significance.

Britain was already a massively proletarian country and any radical extension of democratic rights and democratic ideology would merely have reinforced the struggles of the working class. As I have argued in a previous article in *International* (Vol 6 No 1), it was precisely fear of the proletariat which determined the policy of the British ruling class from the mid-nineteenth century onwards and dominated its political, and economic, strategy. The British ruling class had no serious alternatives to the ones it embarked on.

This also explains the apparent paradox, which Gamble dwells on at length, concerning the adoption by the British ruling class of the policy of free trade from the mid-1840s onwards. Why, asks Gamble, did the British ruling class not pursue a policy similar to that of Germany and the United States of building up its industry behind high tariff barriers?

In reality, in addition to the conjunctural estimation by the British ruling class during the 1840s that it could outcompete any other state, the choice was in fact dictated by the internal relation of forces. To develop British industry further required either cheap food, to keep down the cost of labour, or a massive assault on the living conditions of the working class — something too politically dangerous in the then social relation of forces. For exactly the same reasons, abandonment of free trade was too dangerous to embark on later. Joseph Chamberlain's 'social imperialism' was defeated not simply by an internal relation of forces within the ruling class but by the fact, mercilessly used by the Liberals in their great electoral victory of 1906, that a protective tariff system would have meant dear food. An attempt to adopt the German system would have resulted in a British equivalent of the German revolution of 1918/19 in a more

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unfavourable social relation of forces. The German and American tariff system only made sense with German and American rates of exploitation. And these were too dangerous for the British ruling class to attempt to adopt.

This point is also of some importance today as it underlies the debate, also discussed by Gamble in some detail, concerning import quotas. Gamble attempts to draw from his correct insistence that the development of the British economy can only be understood in its international context some basis for the ideas of the Alternative Economic Strategy (AES). But to argue for import quotas on the grounds that 'the main source of British economic decline was the nature of the links that have bound the British economy to the world economy' (p.206) is to miss the point completely.

It is absolutely obvious that any socialist government in Britain would have to take control of trade, movement of capital etc. There is no possibility of a planned economy otherwise. But the decisive element in relaunching expansion is control of *investment*, not control of trade. Without control and development of investment, all that the imposition of import controls means is a collapsing domestic siege economy — a perfect scenario for right-wing backlash and takeover with the left discredited for years. But the taking of control of investment out of the hands of the capitalists, their right to dispose of and dominate their assets, means in practice, no matter what the formalities, their expropriation — with the violent consequences they will resort to in order to attempt to prevent this.

This is in fact the contradiction at the centre of the Alternative Economic Strategy and why Gamble is quite incorrect to give it credibility by stating that although there is an alternative economic strategy, there is no political force capable of imposing it (p.227). In reality the AES is itself totally internally incoherent. Any attempt to implement it will result either in economic chaos and a massive right wing advance against a demoralised working class or an absolutely violent central confrontation with the ruling class over the very existence of capitalism — something which takes us far beyond the bounds of the AES. Such a latter development has to be prepared through a totally different type of political strategy than the advocates of the AES propose.

The origins of the particular development of British capitalism lie in its insertion in the international economy. But the solution to the problems of Britain does not lie in the field of economics but that of *politics*. Altering the nature of the links between Britain and the world economy will not solve anything. It is necessary to destroy the *state* power of the capitalist class and use a new state power to reshape the *whole* economy — including its relations to the international economy. The AES is only of relevance to that insofar as an attempt to implement it might, against the will of its proponents, be the occasion for a head-on confrontation with the political power of the capitalist class. But that will be a result not of the correctness of the AES but of its radical incoherence. It is in fact an economistic blind alley.

Anderson v Thompson

Many of the weaknesses of Gamble's argumentation can be traced back to one rather extraordinary weakness in a book of this type. By far the most important debate which has taken place on the development of English history, that between Perry Anderson in his 'Origins of the Present Crisis' and E P Thompson in his 'Peculiarities of the English' is scarcely dealt with — Anderson's essay does not even find its way into the bibliography although his later *Arguments Within English Marxism* does. Given that Anderson's 1964 article is by far the most important analysis of English history, and the crisis of British capitalism written since Trotsky's *Where is Britain Going?* this absence very considerably weakens the book as a summary of existing work.

Thompson's contribution to this debate, with its false perspective on English society but its unquestionable status as the most authoritative and coherent codification of the assumptions of British Labourism, has been republished in his *Poverty of Theory*. But for a systematic study of the origins of the present crisis of British capitalism, it is necessary to plough through library vaults for 15 year old copies of *New Left Review* to find Anderson's article and important contemporary essays by Tom Nairn. (A volume bringing these together is long promised, and overdue, from New Left Books.) Nearly twenty years after they were written the theoretical idiom and some of the concepts of the Anderson/Nairn articles need to be altered as well as certain of their conclusions. But they remain the most outstanding contribution to the analysis of the development of British society since the era of 'classical Marxism' and one which, with the crisis in Labour and Conservative parties, are more relevant than ever.

While Gamble's book does move forward the frontiers of analysis or strategic debate, it is well worth reading and among the most serious contributions to recent writing on the British crisis.

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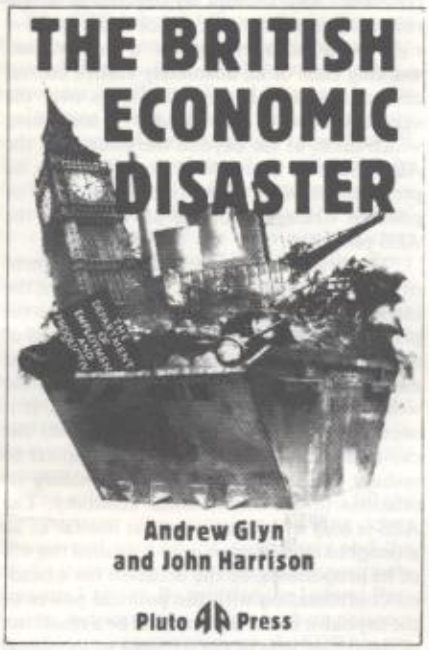
MARX AND THE CRISIS

Ernest Mandel



Andrew Glyn and John Harrison: *The British Economic Disaster*, Pluto Press, 1980, £2.95

This book consists essentially of three intertwined parts: a description and analysis of the decline of British capitalism after the Second World War , first gradual and then more and more precipitate; an explanation of that decline and a critique of various cures proposed for it including the 'Alternative Economic Strategy' of the left Social Democrats; and a more general attempt to explain the new slump of the world capitalist economy, of which the 'British economic disaster' is, in the final analysis, part and parcel.

As we see it, the first part is excellent and generally unassailable. It furnishes splendid ammunition for the working class and Marxists in Britain in their struggle against the capitalist system and the current attempts to place the burden of the slump on the backs of the wage earners. The austerity offensive whose objective is to set the clock back a third of a century on the living standards and social services of the toiling masses represents a social disaster which would merit an indictment every bit as savage and revealing as the one Glyn and Harrison have developed of the economic one.

The second part is good but gives rise to objections which are partially the result of the authors' weakness on crisis theory in general. They examine several current explanations for the economic decline of British capitalism but discard them all too rapidly simply by showing up the inadequacy of each in turn as a 'monocausal' theory. Britain's economic decline is certainly not due *only* to a consistently lower rate of profit than in Germany, Japan, France, or the USA in the period from 1948 to 1968. It is not due *only* to a generally higher rate of capital export from Britain than these other countries. It is not *only* due to a general conservatism of British industrialists — itself connected to the historically determined specific nature of British imperialism and the structure of British finance capital. It is not *only* due to British capitalism missing the boat with the Common Market in 1958. But to state that none of these is the sole cause — which is obviously correct — does not mean that taken together they do not constitute the main causes, which we consider to be the case.

The alternative answer provided by Glyn and Harrison, admittedly in a rather hesitant way, that 'restrictive practices' were stronger in Britain than among its main competitors, seems untenable. The degree of free competition in Japan, to take but one example, or in the key industries of the USA, was certainly no greater than in Britain. If anything, monopoly control over the Japanese economy and these US industries (steel, oil, automobiles, electrical machinery, aerospace, petrochemicals, etc.) was stronger and not weaker than in Britain — if only because the weight of foreign capital not under the control of indigenous finance capital was much smaller there than in Britain during the period 1948 to 1968, and therefore the degree of monopolistic ('inter-imperialist') competition *on the internal market* was much smaller.

Glyn and Harrison's critique of both monetarism and neo-Keynesianism is excellent. But the authors overshoot their goal when they criticise the struggle for the 35-hour week by saying that, in and of itself, it provides no cure for the crisis. Of course it does not — but nor does nationalisation. There is no final 'cure' for the crisis without overthrowing capitalism. And in order to achieve this, it is not sufficient to nationalise 250 companies (even under workers' control and without compensation). You must also destroy the bourgeois state: take away the political and economic power of the bourgeoisie, and destroy the legal, constitutional, and economic basis of private property and the accumulation of capital. Otherwise, as the recent history of Portugal illustrates only too well, capitalism can remain very much alive despite the most massive nationalisations.

All this, however, is no argument whatsoever against raising the nationalisation of 250 companies as the key transitional slogan on the economic field. Similarly, it is no argument against raising the demand for a 35-hour week without loss of pay or speed-up as a key transitional slogan on the social terrain. Massive structural unemployment is a murderous scourge of the working class. To oppose it by all means available is the elementary duty of class-conscious workers. The 35-hour week is simply a concretisation of the demand of the *Transitional Programme* for a sliding scale of working hours: with unemployment at about 10 per cent, a real 10 per cent cut in the working week would amount to a redistribution of workload among all available wage labourers.

What would be the actual concrete effect should such a demand be realised through a big working-class struggle would depend on a number of factors. But it is as crucial to fight for this objective today as it was in Marx's time — and with Marx's enthusiastic support — to fight for a ten-hour day and then, between 1890 and 1918, for an eight-hour day.

The weakest part of Glyn and Harrison's book is the theoretical one: their attempt to provide an explanation of the slump, the long wave with a stagnating tonality, which hit the international capitalist economy from the late sixties and early seventies. They reject the classical Marxist explanation of this slump based on the operation of the tendency of the rate of profit to decline. They substitute for this an explanation in which over-accumulation of capital combined with a scarcity of labour provoke a 'profit squeeze' through the explosion of real wages.

Glyn and Harrison's critique of the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to decline — as a result of the continuting increase in the organic composition of capital and the impossibility, in the long run, of the rate of surplus value being sufficiently increased to catch up — is confused and weak.

While correctly criticising the confusion of physical (technical) relations and value relations, the authors themselves fall into this very trap by using as indices (p 176) capital stock per worker or 'value of capital per worker', instead of comparing the value of capital stock operated upon by a worker with that workers' *wages*. They tend to reduce constant capital to fixed capital, which assumes that raw material costs remained a fixed part of total production costs throughout the post-war period which is an impossible assumption (and one which would provide quite unwarranted support for the ideological attempt of the bourgeoisie to present the explosion of oil prices as an exogenous *deus ex machina* rather than seeing it for what it is: a logical part of a normal cyclical movement which we encounter again and again in the history of the capitalist economy). They tend also to equate variable capital with 'the wage bill', thereby eliminating from their account the problem of the growth of unproductive wage labour in the capitalist economy — a phenomenon which is far from accidental.

For a long time now, we have addressed a challenge to all critiques, Marxist and non-Marxist alike, of the law of increasing organic composition of capital: please show us just *one* branch of production in which wage costs are a higher fraction of total production costs than they were 50 or 100 years ago. If you can not, and I think you can not, isn't that sufficient proof that the long-term trend of technical progress under capitalism is labour saving from the point of view of value? And isn't this what the law of increasing organic composition of capital is basically all about?

The substitute explanation of the slump which Glyn and Harrison offer is, moreover, even weaker than their critique of the law of the tendency of the rate or profit to fall. Granted, there is a substantial unevenness (disparity, dissimilarity) between international mobility of capital and international mobility of labour in bourgeois society on account of 'social constraints (p 11). We have

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repeatedly made the same point too. But you can not demonstrate, either empirically or theoretically, that suddenly the reserves of additional labour dried up in the second half of the 1960s.

The post-war period saw one of the largest, if not the largest, wave of international migration that capitalism has ever witnessed. Why should 'social constraints' have mysteriously stopped this wave at the level of a three million influx of wage earners into Britain, France and Germany (after a first influx of ten million in East German refugees) instead of, say four million or five million? Reserve labour was still available on a massive scale in Greece, Turkey, North Africa, and even the Iberian peninsula and Southern Italy (not to mention the Indian subcontinent). Is there any evidence of a halt in immigration around 1965? And, as to political constraints, are we to believe that Enoch Powell turned the tide of world history single-handed? Is increasing xenophobia and racialism not the *result* rather than the *cause* of unemployment: did it not follow the turn of the economic tide rather than preceding it? And how do you explain that the 'profit squeeze' seems to continue up to this very day despite 30 million unemployed in the imperialist countries?

Undoubtedly, as has always been the case during the second phase of a long wave, the high level of employment in Western Europe and Japan strengthened the labour movement and made further increases in the rate of surplus value more and more difficult. But this was a contributory factor to, rather than the main cause of, the decline in the rate of profit. We should add that in the main imperialist country, the USA, residual unemployment at the height of each cycle actually *increased* from 3 per cent in 1953 to 4 per cent in 1956, 5 per cent in 1960, and 6 per cent in 1970.

A much more useful approach than that adopted by Glyn and Harrison is to analyse the *specific nature of capital accumulation* in each phase of a long wave, to see how normal and logical (both in terms of the 'logic' of capitalism and the 'logic' of Marxist theory) it is for 'innovative' investment to be replaced first by 'vulgarising', then by 'rationalising' investment; for monopolistic surplus profits (technological rents) first to appear then disappear; for the organic composition of capital first to slow down, then to reassert itself. We also see how there are limits to the rise of the rate of exploitation which slows down precisely when the rise in the organic composition of capital is stepped up; it is here that the level of employment and the strength of the labour movement obviously come into their own — but this is a far cry from the 'profit squeeze' thesis.

All this said, Glyn and Harrison have written a book which is extremely useful and stimulating. It shows that Marxism is once again being developed in a creative way, that parrots are out and critical thought is back with us. We shall come nearer and nearer to a rounded Marxist theory of crisis — which Marx unfortunately found no time to leave for us — the more debates there are with serious Marxist economists like Andrew Glyn and John Harrison.

THE HIDDEN ECONOMY

Joe Singleton

Janos Kenedi, *Do It Yourself*, Pluto, 1981, £2.95

Hungary is a small country. Its population is roughly 10 million people, of whom a little over 5 million are, as the textbooks say, economically active. Very active indeed or so we are told in this new book from the Hungarian oppositionist writer, Janos Kenedi, especially in their spare time.

Every economy has its moonlighters, and the typical British building worker will from time to time do a little on the side. But in Hungary just about everyone has a foot in the second economy. Hungary is a country of large industrial enterprises and massive agricultural co-operatives. Some 73 per cent of all enterprises in Hungary employ over one thousand workers; the comparable figure for Italy is 17 per cent and for West Germany only 39 per cent. It's a similar picture in agriculture. The Nadudvar farming co-op is an amalgamation of over 300 farms and most of these farming co-ops are so big that they build factories and engage in industrial production on a large scale as well.

But in this economy where big seems to be beautiful there are almost 2 million small plots of land with which about 5 million people are associated (ie. half the population). And on these plots they produce 35 per cent of the country's total agricultural output. The vast majority of those farmers (85 per cent) do this part-time, in addition to their regular job in the socialist sector. In the private sphere the population also builds 40,000 dwellings each year. In small-plot farming and building alone this is the work-time equivalent of about one million people (out of a 5 million working population). So much for the enormous scale of the second economy.

But why do they do it? The state-lorry driver siphons off petrol and sells it on the side. The driver is paid only 4,000 forinths. 'Nobody's allowed to pay 10,000 forinths to a driver — that's a director's salary. But they have to. Below 8,000 forinths you wouldn't find a monkey to sit in the drivers seat.' So how is it done? The company gives them twice the amount of fuel the lorry requires. 'What the drivers lose in miserly wages, they gain on the swings of freely flowing petrol'. The black market is an essential part of the 'hidden economy' and the motivation is the same here as throughout most of this social and economic netherworld — the need to supplement official income.

Do It Yourself, in spite of the statistics above, is not an academic account of small farming, black-marketeering or bribery. As the blurb on the back cover says, this is 'a hilarious and bittersweet account of how he built his own house.' But as his description proceeds from the first bureaucratic encounter with the planning committee, the acquisition of 'non-existent' materials, the bribes, the string-pulling, the black transport, the network of favours, through to the moonlighter syndrome, a picture emerges with impelling clarity of the social and economic system 'as it really is'.

I have already explained that money was a compelling factor in sending the city workers to the small plot in the village for the weekend, or in ensuring a plentiful supply of state-employed bricklayers or plumbers willing to slip off for an afternoon or weekend with their state-owned tools and equipment into the more lucrative field of 'private' work. But money isn't all — that would be capitalism. The artisan can buy a lot of things from high earnings, but far from everything. Backdoor contacts and influence can be much more important than money.

There is a waiting list for a new car, university entrance comes up next spring, the doctor whose roof you just laid has a sister-in-law who is friends with the director of a haulage firm that could carry the timber you need for the extension on your own house. Socialism ensures, says Kenedi, 'that no such airy-fairy things as "sanctity of contract" will protect the house owner against his contractor, but personal relationships within society. We must realise that between the completion of work and payment due there stands a person. The dissonance between the two aspects can only be resolved by personal relations'. The network of influence peddling, bribery and corruption (less 'alienating' than the cash-nexus of capitalism?) is a true hallmark of Eastern Europe's actually existing socialism.

Janos Kenedi is a well known figure in the growing circle of Hungarian oppositionists. He edited *Profile*, one of the first collections of modern Hungarian samizdat, published in 1978, and in August 1980 was one of the seven Hungarians prevented by the Kadarist police from travelling to Poland to express their support for the free trade union Solidarity. *Do It Yourself* was submitted for publication in Hungary but was rejected for 'generalising from individual occurrences', and 'only taking negative factors into account'. It circulates nonetheless in the world of samizdat. Kenedi is blacklisted from work because of his views. He is also prevented from travelling abroad. To join the small band of unemployable dissenters in Hungary is not an insignificant achievement. To persevere in this with optimism and wit is impressive.

Perhaps, he says in the final sentence of the book, the powers that be 'may take to heart my experience as related here and recognise the maxim that when you close one door, another will invariably open'. An excellent book and very good value for only £2.95.

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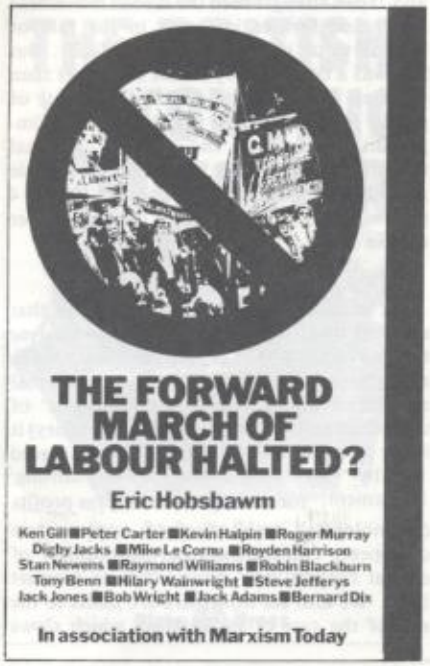
MARCHING RIGHTWARDS

Phil Hearse

Eric Hobsbawm et al *The Forward March of Labour Halted* (edited by Martin Jacques and Francis Mulhern), NLB/Verso, 1981, £2.95.



It's a long time since a book annoyed me as much as this one. But since I try not to get annoyed about unimportant things, it was obviously because I thought the book said something significant. Indeed all the central problems of the British left are debated out here: most of the right questions are posed. Regrettably, and this in itself is a sad comment on the state of the British socialist intelligensia, few of the right answers are given.

The book's origins lie in a debate initiated in *Marxism Today* by Eric Hobsbawm. He argued that the high point of self-organisation and class consciousness of the British working class was reached in the early 1950s, after the first post-war Labour government. Since then there has been a *decline* of class consciousness, reflected in such things as a decreasing vote for the Labour Party. The struggles of the working class are characterised by increasing sectionalism and fragmentation. The working class itself is increasingly split along lines of occupation, race, sex, age, etc. and this has led to fragmentation rather than unity. His initial article insisted that a new strategy of unification was needed.

In his second essay in the book, replying to the debate, Hobsbawm begins to expand on what that strategy might be. In this essay he starts to pose the problem of assembling a popular majority for socialist change: the key being the expansion of working class support into middle class layers and attracting those people who might otherwise go over to the SDP. By implication, Hobsbawm argues that Bennism is a left sectarian barrier to this kind of project, and that what we need is something like the Italian Communist Party's 'historic compromise'. In other words, to get a popular majority we need to move to the right and present a multi-class programme, not a narrowly 'sectarian' working class programme.

Class consciousness is, as they say, a problematic concept and one which cannot be measured by a single yardstick like election results. Since the early 1950s, and in particular in the late 1960s and early 1970s, there has been a massive increase in trade unionisation, and in industrial struggle. In 1968 the number of strikes in Britain trebled and in the following six years there was a higher level of industrial militancy than at any time since the 1920s. Indeed, the industrial strength of the working class has been an increasingly intractable problem for the British ruling class during this period. It is one of the major problems for the 'forward march of capital' in Britain that the British working class is perhaps the most extensively unionised in the world.

But does this add up to an increase in class consciousness, and does it create the basis for Labour to move forward? And how does it relate to the decline in the Labour vote? One might argue that the latter problem reflects the experience of successive Labour governments which have implemented right-wing policies. It is necessary also to point out that industrial militancy is not *just* sectional and economistic: it has also created the basis for solidarity and the unification of working class struggles — look at the massive support for the five imprisoned dockers in 1972, the miners strikes and the Grunwick workers.

But Hobsbawm has a point, and one very badly answered by the 'far left' contributors in this book, Steve Jeffreys, Hilary Wainwright and Robin Blackburn. Militancy, whether industrial militancy, tenants' militancy, trades council militancy, international solidarity militancy or any other kind of militancy, will not in itself provide overall goals, an overall direction for the movement. *National* political solutions, to be implemented by governments are also needed to give the militancy of sections of the working class a coherent project around which to unify. Hilary Wainwright suggests the key role of trades councils, tenants' groups etc; Steve Jeffreys points to picket lines and rank and file militancy; and Robin Blackburn calls for more socialist education.

Hobsbawm has no difficulty whatever in showing how all these are quite inadequate as strategic answers to the problem of how to take the left forward. In the end, therefore, the book ends up with a classic false dichotomy, and at the risk of unbecoming immodesty, one can only regret the absence of a contribution from the political current represented by this journal. The question is: how can economic or other forms of partial and sectoral militancy be integrated with a national political thrust to create a new breakthough, and turn around the political impasse in which the left apparently finds itself? The answer is plain: the fight for the next Labour government and the struggle over what policies it should implement, and the connected fight on the question of the accountability to the working class of that government.

Steve Jeffreys and Hilary Wainwright, in their different ways, confuse their historical judgement of the ability of the Labour Party to carry through the transition to socialism, with the question of whether fighting inside the whole labour movement for a 'Labour government committed to socialist policies' can be an essential component in maturing working class consciousness, unifying the working class, and above all creating a space for socialist politics. Those people who spend their time rushing from industrial dispute to industrial dispute, without at the same time relating to the central *political* struggle associated with the name of Tony Benn in the Labour Party, and its affilitated organisations (and centrally the industrial unions), make a big error.

There are two implicit responses to Bennism in this book. Hobsbawm's right Eurocommunist line is that it is left sectarian to non-proletarian social layers. Steve Jeffreys seems to think that it's a dangerous diversion. Jeffreys — a well known spokesperson of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) — shows clearly the price that organisation pays for its ultra-left syndicalist errors when it comes to understanding the dynamics of Labour politics.

Bennism, like all left social democratic projects, is unfortunately reformist — and thereby potentially dangerous. It has other potential as well. It comprises first and foremost tens of thousands of workers, most of them in industrial unions, who want no more truck with the Callaghans and Wilsons of this world. This is an important step forward and provides an immensely positive opportunity for revolutionaries. The onus is on the whole revolutionary left to make the boldest steps to link up with Bennite workers and to engage them in the sharpest ideological confrontation within the framework of united activity. This means that revolutionary socialists must be active in the Labour Party and the trade unions, changing the dispersed multiple foci of their previous activity, but not for one moment giving up their critique of Benn's reformism. If revolutionary socialists fail to make this transition, they will lose a historic opportunity to link up with the most important political development for 25 years.

Hobsbawm's concern to link up with the middle layers in society evokes precisely the worst possible response. The middle class in Britain, currently undergoing a certain politicisation which in different ways is as evident in Bennism and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament as in the Social Democratic Party, will undoubtedly polarise around either bourgeois or socialist solutions to the crisis — or split between them. The working class won't maximise its alliance with these middle layers by moving to the right, but only by appearing to be the most decisive, the most ideologically advanced, the most unified, indeed the 'hegemonic' class.

The forward march of Labour can, if socialists act correctly, be resumed with a vengeance in the next few years.

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MOULD BREAKERS?

Steve Kennedy

Ian Bradley, *Breaking the Mould?*, Martin Robertson, 1981, £2.95

On 26 March 1981 in London's Connaught Rooms, before some 500 representatives of the world's press and two dozen camera crews from American and European television networks, a new party was born. In the nine months since its launch, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) has chalked up some notable successes:

* Its group at Westminster has more than double the number that sit on the Liberal benches; its 26 MPs include 24 defectors from the Labour Party, one from the Tories, and Shirley Williams, elected under the SDP's own colours in Crosby. As David McKie pointed out in the *Guardian* on 12 December, it has already virtually decimated (in the strict sense of removing one in ten) the Labour contingent of whose 268 MPs elected in May 1979. It has so far removed 26, if George Cunningham (now sitting as an independent) is taken into account.
* Between early July and the end of November, the SDP had won 24 local by-elections and their Alliance partners, the Liberals, 62. Between them, they have taken an average of 46 per cent of the vote and won some 51 per cent of the 169 contests recorded (*New Statesman*, 27 November 1981). Many more local councillors have defected from other parties (again, particularly from Labour) and at least one major metropolitan council has fallen into their hands in this way.
* Opinion polls consistently show the Liberal/SDP Alliance enjoying the support of some 40 per cent of the electorate as against 25 to 30 per cent each for the Tories and Labour.

Less measurable, but equally important, has been the new party's effect in catalysing a new politicisation among managerial and professional groups: especially senior and middle managers, media people, and academics. For the first time since the Wilson years, a wide range of economists, lawyers, and social administrators are emerging from their professional pigeon-holes and applying their thoughts to the modernisation of Britain. The journals of the British bourgeois intellectuals, traditionally classical, literary and historical in their concerns, have rediscovered politics and are earnestly debating the merits of social democracy. In effect, the British middle classes have emerged from a period in the wilderness with a new sense of mission, purpose, and direction. All this is neatly captured in Ian Bradley's book:

'The fact was that the SDP did have an enormous initial appeal for that new constituency which had grown up in the 1970s, the vaguely progressive, *Guardian*-reading middle class which worked in education, communications, technology, and the so-called caring professions, and was concerned about the Third World, the environment, the decentralisation of government and staying in Europe... The SDP was well aware that its initial support was likely to come from this group. Why else would it have placed its first advertisement in their house journal, the *Guardian*' (p 109).

Bradley's book also provides an extremely useful and well-informed blow-by-blow account of the formation of the new party, of the political persuasions and pecularities of its leaders, and the character of its initial recruits. Where he sticks to describing events and explaining people's views, Bradley's book is instant journalism at its best; unlike many of his Fleet Street colleagues, Bradley — a political journalist of the *Times* and a supporter of the Liberal Party — displays a healthy detachment and while clearly not unsympathetic to the new party, he is never uncritical. The story he tells is absorbing, readable, and occasionally revealing.

When it comes to political analysis, however, the book must be judged a failure. Partly, this is a matter of Bradley's journalistic background and the tendency to rely on second hand retailing of other people's accounts. But more fundamentally, it is the product of his identification, if not with the party, with its intellectual underpinnings: thus the fundamental problem of British politics is simplistically presented as one of 'adversary politics' preventing the pursuit of 'sensible policies'; the progress of the Labour Party in the 1970s is seen through the spectacles of defectors like David Marquand and Stephen Haseler as a headlong flight to the left (would that it was!); and the 'breaking the mould' of the title is conceived simply in terms of ending the alternation of Labour and Tory governments that has marked British politics since the War.

Bradley has no sense (or at least conveys no sense) that there are alternative diagnoses of Britain's problems. His account is idealist in the worst sense: one looks in vain for an acknowledgment that the crisis of traditional politics is the result of a profound economic and social crisis of British Imperialism. For Bradley, as for the SDP, it is simply a matter of putting old wine (vintage claret perhaps) in new bottles. That radical measures rather than re-run compromises are necessary to confront the realities of British decline, discussed elsewhere in this issue of *International*, is not even considered. The consequence is that *Breaking the Mould?* does not even touch on the greatest danger faced by the new party: the disillusionment of its supporters that will necessarily ensue when the SDP/Liberal Alliance, either alone or more likely in coalition with a Thatcherless Tory Party, finds that the economic policies of Heath and Jenkins work no better under their new colours than they did under the old.

Perhaps more surprising is Bradley's weakness in analysing the character of the party and its policies. One can sympathise here with the difficulty of writing in its earliest days about a party determined not to make public more than a skeletal and uninformative statement of policy (he quotes David Owen replying to an enquiry about the new Party's manifesto: 'Look, love, if you want a manifesto, go and join one of the other parties!' (p120). But his use of Shirley Williams' and David Owen's respective books *Politics is for People* and *Face the Future* to fill in the gaps has already proved mistaken. 'Both David Owen and Shirley Williams... emphasise in their books that they are socialists... Owen's first chapter... expresses his particular commitment to what he sees as a decentralist socialist tradition... now represented by European social democracy' (p 126).

The few short months since these words were written have provided ample evidence both in terms of the leadership (Jenkin's ascendancy over Owen and Williams) and the membership (whose attitudes, see particularly *New Statesman*, 4 December 1981, indicate that their party will end up, if anything, to the right of the Liberals) that the SDP's connections with any form of socialism will be tenuous to say the least. It is interesting in this respect, to note how many references to 'Socialism' have been deleted in the revised paperback edition of Owen's book and replaced with less contentious terms.

Perhaps part of the problem, here, lies in Bradley's failure to differentiate sufficiently between the politics of Owen and Williams, on the one hand, and the Jenkinsites, on the other. While he distinguishes two quite distinct groups in the party middle class Croslandite reformists and right-wing labour movement bureaucrats — there are, in fact, as Paul Thompson argues in a useful article in *Revolutionary Socialism* (Winter 81/82), more accurately three. And while a proliferation of study groups work away at producing new, somewhat less statist, Fabian blueprints for Britain's future social services, it is becoming increasingly clear that a far from radical Jenkinsite economic policy will make them the first electoral promises to be broken.

So what of beaking the mould? Bradley suggests that incidental factors may make the Liberals the main beneficiaries of the SDP's emergence; or the SDP may 'sink without trace... the cruellest trick yet played on Britain by its crazy electoral system' (p 160). With a few months of extra evidence of the Alliance's growing electoral support, of the continuing civil war in the Labour Party exacerbated by the present attempts to witchunt the left, and the apparent impossiblity of deflecting the Tories from pursuing the Thatcherite course to the end, it now looks almost certain that the SDP and Liberals will be centrally involved in the government elected in 1984. In Bradley's limited sense, then, they will have broken the mould, and if they pursue their pledge to implement a system of proportional representation, British bourgeois party politics will never be the same again.

Whether the new British politics will be shaped in a Social Democratic mould is, however, quite a different question and one whose answer lies largely in the hands of the labour movement. For it is only if we fail to develop a clear and popular socialist alternative as disillusionment with the performance of the SDP in government sets in, that we will offer up on a plate the possibility of consructing a new hegemonic alliance to the parties of the ruling class. The Social Democrats may be the breakers of the mould; the question is who will pick up the pieces?

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WHICH ROAD FOR LABOUR?

John Harrison

Geoff Hodgson: *Labour at the Crossroads*, Martin Robertson, 1981, Hbk £12.50, Pbk £4.95.

As I sit down to write, the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party has just refused to endorse Peter Tatchell as parliamentary candidate for Bermondsey, and his General Management Committee has reaffirmed its support for him. Tariq Ali's application to join the Labour Party has just been rejected by his local ward, accepted by the General Management Committee and vetoed by the National Executive Committee, which has also voted to 'investigate' *Militant*. Neil Kinnock has received a going-over from his constituency party for supporting Foot's witch-hunt and Tony Benn has declared himself deputy leader.

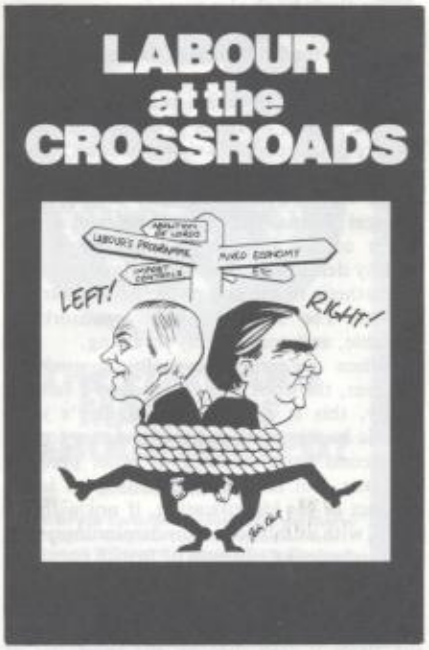
All this in a few days — a fairly dramatic state of affairs even by recent Labour Party standards.

At times like these — when the battle lines are clear and the action thick and fast — revolutionaries in the Labour Party are in danger of losing strategic perspective in the heat of day to day skirmishes. For this reason, if no other, it is important to read as many serious analyses of the party as the rash of emergency meetings allows. *Labour at the Crossroads* is a case in point. Few books have been more timely. It is concerned with prospects for the party — and the left within it — and with the adequacy of its 'Alternative Economic Strategy' (AES).

It is in two parts, the first focuses directly on the party. It surveys Labour's origins, internal structures and patterns of electoral support, before tracing its political trajectory since 1945. The second part looks at Britain's economic crisis and the various 'solutions' on offer — of which only the AES receives the Hodgson seal of approval.

The opening chapters on the birth and constitutional ground rules of the party are well informed and clearly presented. But they are not very gripping. The next bit on electoral support is basically a statistical run through of voting loyalties since the war. It brings together much useful opinion poll and electoral data and analyses it sensibly. But, again, it is hardly nail-biting stuff. By about page 60 I was beginning to think that *Crossroads* would turn out to be one of those books you keep for reference but never read from cover to cover — infinitely more useful than its TV namesake but about as exciting.

But then it suddenly took off. The next three chapters on the political evolution of the party since 1945 — which become more detailed as we approach contemporary events — are really gripping. They are particularly strong on the complex interplay between the political and trade union wings of the labour movement. Here, in contrast to the earlier chapters, you get a feel for the movement as a living entity in flux, rather than merely as a set of institutions with rules, procedures and fluctuating support.



Hodgson suggests a metaphor which is worth developing. It concerns volcanic activity. At high points of class struggle hot lava bursts through previously stable social terrain. As the struggle recedes, the lava cools and forms a hard crust protecting this terrain from bubblings below. Call this layer trade union bureaucracy, or the right wing of the Parliamentary Labour Party. But the volcano is never fully extinguished. Lava is always liable to erupt and cause fissures in the crust. While some parts are cooling and hardening, others are cracking and venting.

Tracing the connections between these eruptions, coolings and fissures is crucial to an understanding of the development of the movement as a whole. Chapers 5, 6 and 7 do this well. This is very much to Hodgson's credit, because all too few on the Labour left are prepared to admit to the existence of splits between different sections of the movement — let alone analyse the lines of fissure. Most prefer to try to paper over the cracks.

In discussing the causes of the economic crisis, Hodgson correctly focuses on the poor productivity performance of the UK. This he rightly sees as being only partly explained by low investment; output per worker is also generally lower in Britain than elsewhere even when similar equipment is used. Hodgson puts this down mainly to poor 'managerial-worker relations' but he seems curiously unwilling to attribute the major role in this situation to trade union strength at the point of production.

Turning to the solutions on offer, Hodgson demolishes the monetarist position on inflation and argues persuasively that the 'Thatcher experiment' is currently failing. But I think he goes over the top when he argues that a Thatcher-type approach could never provide a way out of the crisis for capital. Sustained unemployment could in principle shift the balance of class forces in capital's favour enough to lay the basis for a successful expansion. The other pro-capitalist solution Hodgson considers is 'corporatism' — by which he basically means the incorporation of existing trade union bodies into tripartite institutions with state and employers' organisations. This use of the term 'corporatism' differs from the classic one, which refers to formally similar arrangements in fascist regimes in which independent workers' organisations have been smashed and replaced by state puppets.

My view is that, so long as trade union strength remains intact, moves towards incorporation, whilst likely, can be little more than short term holding operations for capital. In themselves, they can offer no long term solution. (Incidentally the section of this chapter on proportional representation is very stimulating).

This brings us to the AES. Hodgson's defence of the strategy is the part of his analysis with which I disagree most. This is not the place to summarise the debate. But it is worth taking up two of Hodgson's rejoinders to left critiques of the AES.

One concerns the Trotskyist demand for more nationalisations than are envisaged in the AES — say *Militant's* 200 companies, as against the AES's 20 or 25. Hodgson objects to this demand in part because it seems to him inconsistent with another left criticism of the AES — that it fails to take seriously capitalist resistance — '...there is no reason to assume that the nationalisation of 200 companies would meet any less effective resistance than the public ownership of twenty five.' (p. 204)

This is wrong. Obviously capital would be upset by widespread nationalisations. But that does not necessarily mean *effective* opposition. Indeed, the point of *widespread* takeovers is precisely to deprive the bourgeoisie of one of its most powerful weapons of resistance — control over means of production.

Another of Hodgson's rejoinders to the Far Left (he is fond of capitalisation) concerns import controls and the threat of retaliation. He argues that since the AES aims to expand, rather than reduce imports, the spectre of retaliation is illusory. Why should foreign capital object to an increase in UK sales (albeit a controlled one)? This is a correct point to make against crude assertions that import controls necessarily 'export unemployment'. But it misses the main point. Export volumes are not the only consideration when it comes to retaliation. In the context of the AES, import controls would rightly be seen as breaking the rules of the international capitalist game and as the thin end of the wedge of socialist planning.

In conclusion *Labour at the Crossroads* is an informative and stimulating book about an important topic. Anyone who gets the chance should read it.

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LEARNING FROM BEVAN?

Colin Talbot

Mark Jenkins: *Bevanism — Labour's High Tide*, Spokesman Books, £4.95 paperback.

As the title suggests, Mark Jenkins sets out in this book to show that the Bevanite left of the Labour Party in the fifties was a milestone in Labour's history. He makes large claims for the Bevanites, as the 'broadest, most popular Labour current this century.'

In the process of trying to prove his claims, Jenkins has amassed a wealth of information about the Bevanite movement, from its origins under the 1945-51 Labour government until the breakup of the Bevanite parliamentary group in 1955. It is a tremendously useful source of information on the recent history of the labour movement.

Having said that, the book is far from perfect. It certainly isn't aimed at a popular audience, some 67 pages out of 300 are notes, making reading a tiresome and cumbersome business. Perhaps more effort could have been made to make it accessible to the 'ranks', as Jenkins insists on calling the mass of Labour and trade union members.

Mark Jenkins spent a considerable part of his political life in Gerry Healy's Workers' Revolutionary Party and its predecessors and this has marked not just his politics but also his writing style, which in places sounds like the most inane Healyite polemics masquerading as 'dialectics'. Despite these obstacles the book is very interesting and puts forward a novel thesis on Bevanism.

The Bevanite movement began to emerge under the Labour government with the formation of 'Keep Left' and the publication of two pamphlets, 'Keep Left' (1947) and 'Keeping Left' (1950). The central theme of the Keep Left group, and subsequently of the whole Bevanite movement was simple. They argued that the landslide Labour victory of 1945 had given the party the momentum and the majority necessary to begin to implement real socialist policies. Rail, gas, coal, electricity, iron and steel and the Bank of England were all nationalised. The Welfare State was inaugurated, most clearly by the establishment of the National Health Service.

The Bevanites lobbied within the Parliamentary Labour Party for the continuation of these policies and deepening of the reform programme. They were arguing against the tide, as the majority of the PLP and trade union leaders began to opt for 'consolidation' of the existing gains before any further advance.

The second strand of the debate revolved around international policy and armaments. The majority of the PLP held firmly to the police of re-armament to meet the 'communist menace' and the creation of a Western Alliance. While the Bevanites accepted the need for limited re-armament they were unhappy with the massive schemes advanced by the Labour government (which proved so impractical that even Churchill was forced to scale them down!) Similarly they partially accepted the idea of the 'red menace' but thought that US aggression and hysterical anti-communism went too far, instead arguing for moves towards detente with the Soviets.

Jenkins adds a great deal of detail to these general positions, especially in relation to the shades of opinion among the left and how these positions evolved in the rapidly changing international situation. The broad outlines of the debate have been well documented, much more briefly in Ralph Miliband's *Parliamentary Socialism* and David Coates' *The Labour Party and the Struggle for Socialism*.

Jenkins makes useful points about what he sees as the Bevanites' key political weakness, their failure to find a real 'third way' between the twin evils of Soviet Stalinism and US imperialism. Many on the left were certainly drawn into both the pro-Soviet and pro-American trap that the icy blast of the developing Cold War encouraged.

But he fails to draw out the real link between this failure of the left to adopt a real internationalist foreign policy and its domestic policy. It simply proposed 'more of the same', a continuation of the early reformist push of the 1945-51 government. He denounces the Bevanites for failing to see the need for revolutionary action to overthrow Stalinism in Eastern Europe but fails to criticise their lack of understanding of the need to overthrow British capitalism through similar revolutionary means.

This inconsistency clearly comes from Jenkins' myopic fascination with the need to give Bevanism its 'full historic credit'. In this endeavour he launches attacks on other Labour historians, particularly David Coates, for failing to understand Bevanism and underestimating its real strengths.

In glossing over weaknesses of Bevanite policies, Jenkins also attempts to revamp the Bevanites' organisation and tactics. David Coates among others has shown that the Bevanites were first and foremost a parliamentary grouping. They had massive support in the constituency parties and the trade unions, as both Coates and Miliband accept, but they were very poorly organised when compared with, for example, the inter-war Labour left, especially the ILP. Michael Foot's authoritative (and adulatory) biography of Nye Bevan confirms the essentially parliamentary nature of Bevanite organisation.

The Bevanites had strong support in the CLPs to be sure, but they never organised it even there. They had a fine propaganda machine directed at the mass of LP members, at the time numbering more than a million. Through various left publications, pamphlets, the imaginative 'Brains Trusts' meetings, the Bevanite parliamentarians (and a small group of intellectual backers) spoke to thousands.

But this propaganda machine was very much a one way street and the rank and file had no channel, except the well-controlled party machine, to respond to the leaders of the left movement. This helps to explain why Bevanism disintegrated so easily when the parliamentarians finally abandoned their supporters and made peace with their erstwhile enemies in the mid-fifties.

The most powerful force inside the labour movement directed against the Bevanite left was undoubtedly the trade union block vote. The right-wing trade union barons could neutralise the whole of the Bevanites' CLP support with a wave of a hand. While some unions were slowly won to the left's cause, it was too little and too late to prevent the eventual destruction of Bevanism.

While David Howell has recorded in *British Social Democracy* that the Bevanites made 'no attempt... to organise the left within key unions' and that they relied on 'spontaneous union democracy', Jenkins repeated ly asserts the sufficiency, if not the splendour of Bevanite organisation.

Of particular interest to revolutionary Marxists is the chapter dealing with the Socialist Fellowship and the emergence of the newspaper *Socialist Outlook* in the vacuum left by the traditional Labour left towards the end of the Labour government. *Socialist Outlook* and the group around it were heavily influenced by a tiny handful of Trotskyists. This chapter is a useful, if infuriatingly incomplete, summary of the emergence, evolution and eventual dissolution of this tendency.

Many of today's young radicals in the Labour Party look to the 1945-51 Labour government and the subsequent Bevanite movement for inspiration in today's fight. Certainly there is much to be learned from this period, but Mark Jenkins draws the wrong conclusions. Bevanism was important, certainly. It has also been underestimated, and Jenkins' book has done much to correct that.

While Bevanism was certainly broad and unquestionably popular, in its politics and its organisation it was far weaker than the previous Labour lefts of the 1920s and 1930s. In that sense, it is no better or worse than previous leftward moves by sections of our movement, it is simply different. Jenkins castigates those who idealise the left of the thirties, only to commit the same crime about the fifties.

Reviews

WORLD CRISES

Ronald Munck

Andre Gunder Frank: *Crisis: In the World Economy, Crisis: In the Third World*, Heinemann, 1980, £4.95 and £5.50

Frank is probably best known for his writings in the late 1960's such as *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America*. His prolific output helped popularise the radical 'dependency' thesis advanced in Latin America to account for the area's domination by imperialism. Various critics pointed out that Frank neglected class relations by his focus on external domination, and that his emphasis on the world market was at odds with the Marxist prioritisation of production relations. Frank seems to have accepted these criticisms and *Dependent Accumulation and Underdevelopment* published in 1978 represented a great advance on his earlier work. He now clearly recognised that domination by a world capitalist system did not mean that all production relations in the Third World were capitalist — there were, in fact a whole range of non-capitalist relations of production some of which persist to the present day. With these new books Frank has moved beyond his interest in the formation of the world economy to its contemporary contradictions and acute crisis.

The first volume presents an overview of the whole world economy and its parts, an analysis of the new capitalist economic and political crisis in the 'West' since 1968, the integration of the 'socialist' countries in the international capitalist division of labour, and the Third World's demand for a 'new international economic order'. Frank's analysis of the post-war boom and the international economic crisis will be familiar to readers of Ernest Mandel's *Late Capitalism* and *The Second Slump*. The response of social-democrats and the Communist Parties to the state austerity and deliberate unemployment policies which followed will also be familiar to any reader of the leftist press. The chapter entitled 'Long Live Trans ideological Enterprise!' is perhaps more novel, showing as it does precisely how the 'Eastern' economies have become increasingly integrated into the *capitalist* world economy. Frank concludes that 'we face a grave crisis of Marxism that is costing the cause of socialism countless millions of supporters around the world'. Few would disagree.

The answer to 'underdevelopment' advanced by the Brandt Commission (which had Edward Heath as one of its members!) was that a new international economic order (NIEO) could be forged to the mutual advantage of the industrialised West and the elites at any rate of the Third World. In this scenario the Third World countries would break from their role as exporters of cheap raw materials and through limited industrialisation provide a bigger consumer market for the West. However, the crisis has led to protectionism which limits the role of Third World exports of manufactured products, and the NIEO has effectively faded from view. The most realistic prospect is the continuation of the old trusty model of imperialism, with perhaps a token gesture towards a NIEO at such limits as the recent Cancun summit.

It is the second volume, *Crisis: In the Third World*, which takes us squarely into the *internal* problems of the countries dominated by imperialism. Frank distinguishes between the principal kinds of Third World economies and the impact of the world economic crisis upon them. There are those countries such as Brazil, India, Iran (under the Shah) and South Africa which have become intermediate, 'semi-peripheral', or more dubiously 'subimperialist' economies. These act as relays in the international imperialist chain, although of course the vast mass of the population does not benefit from this. In most countries agriculture still prevails and Frank provides a useful overview of the development of capitalism there — or 'agribusiness'.

A small group of countries are involved in the export of manufactures (Hong Kong and so on) or oil, where Frank shows clearly the limitations of OPEC — the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries. The analysis then turns to some features and processes that are more or less common to all of these Third World countries: the massive increase in foreign debt, a superexploitation of the labour force which makes the British Industrial Revolution seem benign, and the political repression and growing number of military dictatorships required to maintain this exploitation of the Third World people. The concluding chapter has one of Frank's witticisms as a title — 'Development of Crisis and Crisis of Development'.

So, what is the contribution of Gunder Frank in these recent volumes? In terms of theory they are weak — there is nothing comparable to Mandel's broad sweeping theorisation in *Late Capitalism*. But, if imperialism is not analysed it is described with a wealth of empirical material, and, not to be sneered at, in a readable and even exciting manner.

As with Frank's earlier writings he borrows from a wide range of sources, he synthesises and he popularises. Without using it in a denigrating sense, his work is eclectic. This ensures that it will have a wide readership among students in particular — for whom his catchy phrases like 'the development of underdevelopment' help describe complex processes. The danger is of course simplification...

Politically Gunder Frank could be described as a 'fellow traveller' of revolutionary Marxism. His earlier books which tried to demonstrate the capitalist nature of colonial Latin America (against the 'feudalism' thesis of the Communist parties) rested heavily on the historical work of Latin American Trotskyists such as Luis Vitale. In the books reviewed here there is constant reference to the writings and concerns of revolutionary Marxism. Frank's political outlook though is decidedly pessimistic and he is very critical of 'Trotskyists (who) declare that prerevolutionary situations are in the making in several parts of the world'. Underlying this sceptical stance is Frank's still incomplete break with his earlier work. The focus is still predominantly an exploration, the webs of domination imposed by imperialism. There is little sense, to use a worn phrase, of 'the class struggle as the motor of history'. So, the International Monetary Fund applied its 'remedy' in Peru, but this resulted in a general strike. In Argentina there was a vicious military coup, but popular resistance mounts continuously. In South Africa superexploitation reaches a peak, but the black working class is growing in confidence and militancy. Whether '1984' arrives or not depends on the conscious struggles of real women and men.